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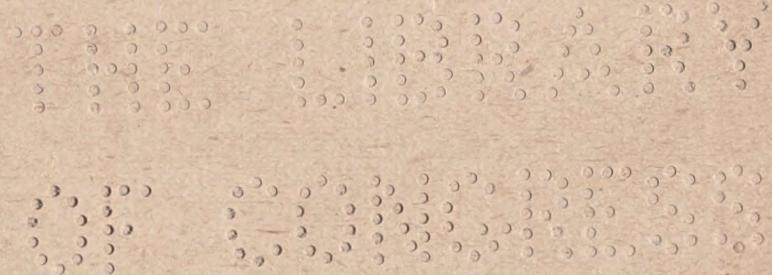
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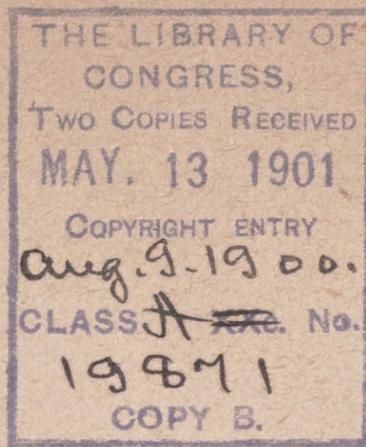
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Letta and Rastus Down in Arkansas.

BY MRS. LUCY M. CROZIER,



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INTRODUCTORY.

The writer having spent twelve years of her early life with those tyranical people is prepared to give a sketch of their lives. While she has given a true story of Letta and Rastus, she has put it in mild form. Truly only a hint of what they realy are. But it is to be hoped that the following pages will be a sufficient hint of what they are. And it is to be hoped that the following pages will be sufficient hint to unsuspecting people who may have helpless orphan children in their care to find homes for, not to let fiends get them into their clutches.

The voyage of an orphan child is a sad one, and especially so, if it falls into the hands of treacherous people. It is often the case that the orphan's entire life is blighted by the cruel treatment it receives in childhood days. For this reason the man or woman who is so unfortunate as to deem it necessary to seek homes for their children, before placing them in care of friends should use great caution in investigating the disposition of the parties with whom they place their children. I think I only do my duty when I say to the bereaved father or mother, be careful who you let have charge of your child, and especially if the child happens to be a girl. There was never a truer saying uttered than "there is no place like home." But it has

two meanings, one in direct opposition to the other. In the first place where children have good and loving parents, or where orphan children are fortunate enough to fall into the hands of humane and affectionate guardians, home is a heaven on earth; but, on the other hand, when orphan children are so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of fiends and brutes, home is hell on earth, and as it was my misfortune to lose my mother when but three years old, and as will be seen in these pages, it was my misfortune to fall into the hands of fiends and brutes, this little book is published with the hope that it may be a means of saving some parents from placing their loving children in the hands of designing brutes.

John
H. H.
1851
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Letta and Rastus Down in Arkansas

CHAPTER I.

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE AT CHURCH.

I was born in Pike county, Missouri. My father was a farmer and lived four miles from Frankford, on a farm that he owned. My mother was a daughter of Rev. John M. Johnson, who was a minister of the Missionary Baptist church. My mother having been raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord was a religeous woman who trusted in the strength of the Master, and walked in the paths that were marked out for her. My earliest recollection of her was when I was about two and one-half years old. My mother took me with her to Mount Pleasant church, where the Missionary Baptists held their regular services. The house was built after the rural ancient style. It was a frame structure, weather boarded and, as well as I can remember, the dimensions were about 40x50 feet, with old fashioned benches and pulpit, with planks set up end ways so high that it took a tall preacher to see over the top of it, while the audience could only see him a little below his chin. Within, the pulpit was provided with a small stool upon which the short preachers stood, in order to be high enough to see over the top. The first I knew I saw a man stick his head above the top of the pulpit, which I at that time thought was a high box. The preacher began to talk very loud and strike his fist on the shelf in front of him. I thought he was calling for some one to help

him out. I was scared and called out, "somebody help him out". My mother said I must not talk while the man was preaching; but I was so anxious to help him to get out of the box, and was so frightened that I could not stop calling for him to be helped out. Then my mother promised me a whipping, as whipping was in fashion in those days, and she made her word good when she got home, notwithstanding my oldest brothers pleadings. She thought it was her duty to keep her word with me.

Soon thereafter mother was taken sick, and after six months died. During her sickness she often called all of us children to her bedside and rehersed the old old story of the cross, and some times sang "I am going home to die no more;" then she tried to impress on our minds that she was going to leave this world to dwell in another where all was joy, peace and love; where sickness, pain and death never come. A few hours before she died, she called us to her side and told us that she was going. She told us to be good children, to walk in the light of God, and eventually meet her in heaven.

The death angel came and she passed away. There were several ladies there, and they attended the dressing of her. Though I was only three years old I observed how tender they were toward her. They dressed her in a white shrowd, then closed her sightless eyes, clasped her pale and icy hands upon her lifeless breast, and laid her down to rest.

The day following I was playing in the front yard, my father called to me and said: "Lucy, come to me." I looked up and saw that he was weeping, and went to him. He took me by the hand and led me to the coffin in which my mother lay. It seems an age since I saw the coffin there. My brothers were standing on the opposite side of the coffin, weeping. Then two gentlemen came near and placed the lid on the coffin and

screwed it down. The coffin was born out in the blinding light of day, the black hearse moved on, the coaches drove away, we stood around the grave and the solemn prayers were read, then the heavy wet earth was shoveled in on our poor mother. No one but the orphan know the sadness of the sound of the dirt falling upon all that is mortal of a beloved mother.

CHAPTER II.

OUR VISIT TO MOTHER'S GRAVE.

Without a loving mother home was a place of sorrow. Still our grandmother, on our fathers side, had lived with us after the death of grandfather and she was as kind to us as she could be, but still we all felt the depths of sorrow without a mother, so grandmother took the care of us all in her own hands. Grandmother was an English lady by descent, her father having been born in England. Grandfather was a Scotchman by birth. Father's people were all educated and high minded people, and there was never a more affectionate and kind hearted people on earth than they were, and grandmother being of a high spirited nature did all that was in her power to make us comfortable as she could, but as she was then seventy years old she could not keep as close watch over us as we should have had. Mother died in December and was buried twelve miles from home, at her father's home. We were deprived of the pleasure of visiting our mother's grave during the winter and father promised us that he would take us to grandfathers as early in the Spring as the weather would permit to take us out. When Spring came he took us

down to grandfather's to see our mother's grave. Next day when we were ready to return home, grandfather told us to go down to the barn lot and pick out a sheep for each one of us, so we went and made our choice, and the old colored servant Siah, caught them for us. We were all proud of our sheep and nursed and hugged and was almost tempted to kiss them as we went home in the wagon, sheep and children all went mixed up together. While we were on the way home, as the old saying is, we began to count the chickens before the eggs were hatched. We calculated raising lambs and then shearing the fleece, and selling the wool, and after a while we would be rich.

It being spring time father and my three oldest brothers went in the field to prepare to make a crop, while my two youngest brothers and myself went wading in the creek catching fish and frogs and we often went into the water until it was up to our chins, then we played in the sun shine until our clothes were dry, as we knew grandmother would put us in style if she learned of us wading in the creek.

On one occasion when father was away from home our oldest brothers decided to go fishing. I wanted to go with them but they objected and when they started I started too, they ran, I ran too, but they were soon out of my sight, but I followed on in the direction that they went. I walked on until I grew weary, then I sat down on the bank of the creek and was soon in deep sleep. I don't know how long I slept but when I awoke it was night and dark and clowdy, not a star to be seen, nor a ray of light of any kind. I did not know where I was, nor how far I was from home, nor which way to start to try to find home, but I resolved to try to find the way home and I wandered along in the dark not knowing where I was going. After walking some distance through the darkness I saw a light and I started toward it. I had to cross the creek in order to

get to the house where the light shown from, and dark as it was I waded the creek. I walked on toward the light and finally I heard some one talking. I turned and went in the direction of the sound of voices. Finally I reached the place and found some colored women milking cows, they asked me whos little girl I was. I told them that I belonged to papa and grandma. They took me in the house and said, look here Marsa Billy what a pretty little girl we have, wonder where she came from, she says she belongs to her papa and grandma. Then the landlady ordered the colored women to take me to the dining room and give me my supper. Then the landlady came in and asked me how I came to be there alone and what my fathers name was. I told her that his name was papa but grandma called him Isaac. She said "Oh, you are Isaac Pierce's little girl are you, where is your papa." I told her he had gone to town. Finally her daughter came in and we recognized each other, as she had frequently visited at our house. She took me upon her lap saying, "Do you know me?" "Yes, your name is Fannie Pitt" how did you come to be here alone?" I told her I went fishing and got tired and went to sleep and when I woke up I was lost. "Well," she said, "You are at Mr. Pitt's house now, and we'll take you home." Then she called to Ned to come and take me home. Ned was an old colored servent that Mr. Pitt owned for a number of years. Ned lifted me up in his arms and carried me home as it was three miles from Mr. Pitts house to my fathers. When we arrived home Ned delivered me to my father and said, "I brought your little angel home." Father never made any investigation as to why I had strayed away from home, but got a switch and put me in fashion, as the fashion in those days was to whip children for every little mistake that they happened to make, which has been the cause of many children leaving their homes and going astray.

Soon thereafter, when all of us children were gathered together in the front yard, father came out and took a seat just outside the door, I suppose for the purpose of breaking the news to us that we would soon have a new mother. However, after he had sat there a few moments, he called to us to come to him and we went. He drew a picture from his pocket saying, "I want to show you a picture of the lady who is to be your new mother." He then told us that he expected to marry in a few days, and that the woman was a good woman and that we must love and respect her. We were delighted with the idea of his getting us a new mother, so the next day he hired a carriage and went to Hanible, Mo., where he married Miss Lizebeth Priso. Next day he brought her home with him. She was an elegant lady in appearance; tall and well built, with black hair and eyes. Her dress was made of plaid silk with hat to match. Grandmama had prepared a reception dinner, and the relatives and neighbors were invited. Dinner being over the guests went home. Some time in the afternoon I went to the parlor door, hoping to get a peep at my new mother. Father and her were sitting side by side. When father saw me, he told me to come in and see my mother, and said to her "this is my little girl." She put her arms around me and kissed me said that I was a pretty little girl. Later in the afternoon my father requested my uncle, Ben Mour, to take the carriage home, which he consented to do, and when Uncle got the horses hitched to the carriage, my youngest brother and myself planed a ride. Unobserved by Uncle we climed up on back of the carriage. When he had driven about fifty yards from the house, I jumpt off, but Brother fell, and by some means his foot got fastened in the spring and he hung with his head down. When he began to yell Uncle stopped the horses, got out of the carriage and helped him down, and told us we both ought to be punished, but we failed to be put in style that day, being

as all parties were so well pleased with the new member of the family. Things went on very smoothly the balance of the day, and all retired with happy hearts. Next morning Grandmother arose early and prepared breakfast. When she called the family for breakfast, we found that Father and his beloved bride had not awoke, but Grandmother was a kind woman, and did not wish to disturbance her new daughter-in-law, and waited breakfast for them.

After some time she and Father entered the dining room and took their seats at the table. She then began to show signs of displeasure. She looked at us children with a frown, and when Father spoke to her she answered him very grufly. Next meal she did not make her appearance, and when Grandmother asked her why she did not come to dinner, she said, "I feel myself too good to eat with a gang of country jakes," this cut grandmother's pride, and she said, "we don't care to have you eat with us, I only asked you for manners sake," then grandmother left her alone and she became more and more remorseful, and in less than a week her lip almost lay on her chin. There being two dwelling houses in the yard, she remained in the one separate from the family, she made her own coffee and baked her own cakes, and ate by herself.

When father went near her he always tried to carress her, but she always spurned him, and acted as if she felt disgusted. Father often attempted to place his arm around her, but she never failed to wrench herself from him, saying, "let me alone." She soon began to complain of her sorrowful fate, and to find fault with us children, saying that she had made a great mistake in marrrying a man with so many children, and often told us that she was daily praying that all of us might go to hell, and that her prayers were always answered.

One day our little brother Eddie was taken sick and she took pleasure in telling us that was an answer

to her prayers, and that he would die, and she would continue to pray the Lord to send afflictions on all of us and that all of us might die and go to hell and then we would all be there together. When we would cry, she stormed at us, saying, "what are you crying about because Eddie will die and go to hell," then she would say, "shut up, you devils you or I will beat every one of you to death." Eddie soon got well and she was very much disappointed. She asked father, one day, to take her to Hanible to visit her mother. He consented and took her and they took me along too. When we arrived at her mothers home, her mother came out to the gate to meet us and father helped us out of the carriage and stepmother threw her arms around her mothers neck and wept bitterly, then we all went into the house except father, who went to the barn to put up the horses. As soon as we got into the house she began to lament her sorrows to her mother by telling her how much she regretted having married a man that had so many children. She said that she liked me very well, but she could not tolerate the boys. Her mother tried to console her by telling her to look to God for comfort who was ever ready to hear and answer her prayers. She spent the most of the winter with her mother and came back early in the spring. She took quite an interest in raising chickens and making garden. She laid claim to every thing on the place and tried to turn every thing that she could into money for herself, notwithstanding she never brought five cents of anything to our home, except her clothes. She gave father to understand that she was boss, and he was bossed, and all hands had to obey her orders, and still she refused to do anything for any of us children, or eat at the same table with us. She made herself obnoxious with every lady that she come in contact with, telling the neighbors that she did not want their society, as they were country jakes and black republicans, as she called the Union people in

the North, and as mother's people were from that direction, she made a specialty of trying to humiliate us, by telling us that our mother's people were old black republicans and negro lovers, but none of us ever felt any shame for that as we had sense enough to know that was only a difference of opinion and that it was an evil that prompted her to talk that way to us.

CHAPTER III.

There was never a more charitable woman than my father's mother and whenever any of the neighbors got sick, grandmother was notified immediately, as they knew she was ever ready to lend a helping hand. It happened in the fall of 1864 that there was a great deal of sickness throughout that section of the country, and grandmother spent a great deal of her time away from home nursing the sick. One afternoon she was to go to visit the sick in the neighborhood and while she was preparing to go, stepmother was in one of her tantrums, and as grandmother knew she was very abusive toward us children and was likely to be more so in her absence, and knowing that she was a strong believer in spirit haunts and ghosts she told her that if she did not treat us better than she had, she would haunt her from the next world. Grandmother only told her that because she knew stepmother would be looking for her after she was dead if she happened to pass away first, and thought it might have a tendency to make her more cautious about her behaviour toward us children. Grandmother had been away but a few days when my three eldest brothers were alarmed at hearing her cough, nothing was more distinct to

them than the sound of her coughing, as it was early in the morning and they supposed she had came home during the night. They inquired of each other to know if either one of the other heard her when she came in, but none of them knew, they called to her, but no answer came back. They were at a loss to know why she did not answer. They arose and went to her room, but to their surprise found she was not there. "Oh, what can this mean," they quered of each other, "she must be some where near hear, we heard her coughing too distinctly to be mistaken." After pondering between themselves they decided to ask step-mother to interpret for them. As early in the morning as opportunity offerded they went to her and related the story to her.

She quickly responded that our grandmother would die within three weeks. "Mark what I say, the cough is a token of her death." She said that tokens always followed the blue-bloods and their descendants, and as grandmother was of that descent, the token was a presentment to warn them of her death. Whether there was any reality in her idea or not, it came true. About two days later, grandmother came home sick. Father summoned a physician, but her affliction was beyond his skill. She lingered along two weeks and died. We children were out in the yard playing, when the nurse came out and broke the sad news to us. It was a sad blow to us, as we now felt that we had no one to love us. She was buried in the family grave yard, by the side of her husband. Her children and grandchildren were all present, except her youngest son, Jonathan, who had gone to California in the early days for the purpose of seeking his fortune in the gold fields.

When the funeral was over, all went home except her two eldest daughters, Aunt Harrait Moore and Aunt Melvinie Brown. Night came and we all retired with heavy hearts. The earth seemed to us like a

dark vale of sorrow, without grandma. Next morning the family arose early, and Aunt Harriet went about putting the rooms in order. Grandmother had during her illness made a will, dividing her affects between her two oldest daughters, as she had already given the other children their proportional part. When they began to gather the things together, stepmother came to the door and said: "Haven't I forbid your taking anything away from here? Go back to your room and attend to your own business." Said Aunt Harriet: "We will take all that mother has given us." Then a quarrel followed. Melvinia, being of a timid nature, remarked that she would not take anything, if she had to quarrel over them, but Aunt Harriet was a woman who would stand up for her rights, and said she would insist on having her share. Then Melvinia said "well sister you may have my share too, as I don't feel like quarreling over it," and began to weep and went home. Then Step-mother said again, "Harriet, I say you shall not take a thing." "I don't care what you say," said Harriet. "You must not think you can impose on me the way you do on these children. Git out of here and attend to your own business, or I will have you arrested at once." Step-mother fled immediately, and Aunt Harriet took all with her that she could get in the wagon and then came back for the balance. Step-mother remained silent for several hours. Then the thought came to her that Grandmother had threatened to come back from the spirit land and haunt her. She became so impressed with the idea, that she became afraid to remain at home, and told Father he must take her to visit her mother. She teased him daily, and told him that she could not sleep at night for fear of being haunted by Grandmother's spirit. He finally granted her request. She remained in Hanible with mother several weeks. When she returned home, she had gotten over her fears to a certain extent, and soon fell into her old habit of fault finding and abusing us

children. She often informed us that she despised children, and that the only consolation she had was that the devil would get every one of us. Notwithstanding that she was a member of Missionary Baptist church in full fellowship and standing, she would tell us that she was daily praying that we might all go to hell; and whenever an opportunity offered itself, she would wound our feelings, often getting our mother's picture and holding it up abuse her, saying, "the daughter of an old black republican ought to be in hell, all the black republicans ought to be there.

One day when she was raging furiously, one of Aunt Harriet's boys happened to be passing the house and decided to stop and see us children. He rode up to the fence and got off his horse and came into the house. She saluted him by saying, "I suppose you have come to get someting to talk about," and added that his room was better than his company. He replyed, "I did not come to see you, Madam, I only came to see the children, and as for talking about you, I don't have to, as I can always find something better to talk about." "Leave here," she cried. "Not 'till I get a good ready," he replied, "I met Uncle Ike down the road, and he invited me to stop and remain here until he returned, and that is what I propose to do," and took a seat very composedly, and remained until Father came.

CHAPTER IV.

Winter was nearing us and heavy clothes had to be made, and we had no Grandmother to sew and patch

for us now, and, small as we were, we felt the weight of our need and dependence. Father had a negro woman hired, but we were aware of the fact that she could not do work like making clothes, and knew that Step-mother did not want to do anything for us 'brats', as she called us, but she did manage to cut the clothes and the negro woman sewed them together after a darkey fashion. Step-mother complained daily of having to do so much for us, especially the boys.

Notwithstanding that she still had some fears of grandmother coming back and haunting her, still her fears were not strong enough to hold her in check. She could not be induced to go into Grandmother's old room, but considered herself perfectly safe in any part of the house where she would abuse us to her heart's content. Good old Jemima, the colored woman, did all in her power to make us comfortable, often telling us that it was her wish that God's blessing might rest upon us, and that when we were done with time and timely things we might all be united in the happy land of Canaan. Aunt Jemima was a faithful colored servant and loved children. One day when Step-mother was raging about so many children, Jemima said to her, "Why, Misses, I don't think there can be too many children. I would like it if we had them strung all around our necks, I would have Santa Claus visit all of them on Christmas day." It was then late in December and Christmas was soon on hand, but Step-mother objected to Santa Clause coming, saying there were too many children. When New Year's morning came we all got up early and Father said, "Lucy, what do you suppose Santa Clause brought for a New Year's gift?" "Nothing," I replied, "ma says there are too many children here for him to come." Then he told me to guess, and I guessed and kept guessing until I had guessed everything I could think of, except a baby. Then I waited and asked if it was a baby, and to my surprise he said yes, a little brother. He went and got

the baby and showed it to me, and I said to him. "It is pretty and sweet, but I don't think you should have taken it as ma is always scolding about so many children, and especially the boys. He said that it was awful cold the night before and Santa Clause could not take care of it any longer. I told him that I thought it would be better not to invite Santa Clause to our house any more, as he had took to bringing babies, and we did not need any of them.

Stepmother made a nurse of my youngest brother, Willie, and every time the baby cried or anything happened to it, she never failed to whip him whether he was to blame or not. He would often say that he would be glad when the baby got old enough to take care of its self, and that there would never be any more accepted in our family. But to his sorrow there was another in less than eighteen months, and then there was two babies to take care of and double whipping to be done. When the oldest one was about twenty months old stepmother persuaded father to take her to visit her mother, again he complied with her request, and took my brother Theodore, and the two babies and myself with them. I had to play nurse on that occasion. I can not tell how many whippings I got during the two and one-half weeks stay there, and I know that I did not do anything deserving of a cross word. During our stay there the oldest baby took sick and died, and stepmother appeared to be deeply grieved over the death of her baby, and her mother advised her not to talk about the child or allow any one else to. While we were getting ready to start home in gathering up our clothes and other things, I discovered the little bonnet that the child had worn, I picked it up and handed it to her, saying, "here is poor little Calvin's bonnet." No sooner than I uttered the words she struck me in the face saying, "you know I don't allow you to speak of him, you will be the cause of me going crazy yet," and after that I used great care never to call the child's name in her presence.

CHAPTER V.

It was in the month of February 1866 when grandfather Johnson took sick. My stepmother was whipping me for accidentally breaking a dish when she heard a rap at the door. She shoved me out of the back door and answered the call. She was confronted by Aunt Deal Johnson who asked if she had heard from father Johnson. She said she did not know and asked her what was the matter. Aunt Deal said that he was sick and they sent after Will yesterday and I have not been able to hear from him since, and I thought I would come and see if I could hear from him through you or Ike. "I did not know he was sick," stepmother said, "nor I don't care if he is, the old black republican, and if he is a Baptist preacher he is an old hypocrit." Aunt Deal was a lady of high culture and too much refined to dispute with her but said, "the war is over and when the people made peace I made peace with them, I wish every body well." She then bid her good afternoon and went home. Next morning Uncle Will called and brought the sad news of grandfather's death. Father went to the funeral and when he returned he told us that grandfather had made his will dividing his property equally between his children, and mothers share between us children. stepmother became enraged at this and said, "he was an old scoundrel for doing so, he should have left it to us (meaning her and her children). Now pa,' she said, 'you shall bring suit and break the will, we need that money our selves and we must have it.'" Father attempted to explain why it could not be done, telling her that grandfather had a perfect right to do as he pleased with his own property, but she would not

listen to him. She said that she knew it could be done, and he could law it out of us children, and if we children dared to speak of our money she would slap us in the face.

On one occasion she overheard Willie building air castles and what he intended to do with his money when he become a man. Stepmother listened to him until she could not bear it any longer. She came in and pounced on him and beat him until he was black and blue, after which she warned him never to lay claim to that money again, telling him that if he did she would kill him.

CHAPTER VI.

Brother George remained at home until he was 17 years of age. Stepmother had a dislike for him from the first time she saw him, and I am sure that she never spoke a civil word to him at any time. Finally he decided to leave home. He said that he knew he could earn his own living and have more pleasure away from home than he had had at home, so he gathered up his clothes and said good bye to the children and started down the road. "The next time we heard from him he was working for Mr. Lapley and was doing well.

George worked faithfully and when the harvest was over Mr. Lapley paid for his labor. He then said George you are a good and trusty boy, and I would like to keep you the balance of the summer. George consented and they agreed on the wages and he went to work again. He worked three days and fell from the wagon and broke his leg. When his stepmother heard of it she rejoiced and said, "ah, ha, I prayed

for that, and that is not all, I mean to continue to pray for something to happen to all, all, all of you nasty little brats and I shall continue to pray until the devil gets the last one of you." This was in the summer and time only had to roll a short time until winter. At this time, as bad as she pretended to hate children, to the great surprise of the children, old Santa Claus made it his business to drop another baby in for me, little devil brat, as she called me, to take care of, and to me though she must surely be lying about not liking children. This time Santa Claus did not wait for Christmas, but just sent them any time he pleased. We thought she was the biggest liar or the biggest fool in the world for letting Santa Claus leave so many babies at our house. Willie grew so tired of nursing babies that he began to stoutly demur against Santa Claus ever coming that way but to our still greater surprise babies began to come in spring, summer, fall and at all seasons of the year they came fast and thick. As brother Willie raised greater objections of allowing so many babies left with her, for him to nurse, she only whipped him the more and still the babies came faster. She had to muster in more of us as nurses to assist Willie. There were so many of the babies, and as they had come in so fast, she could not muster any of them in to help nurse the smaller ones. We, of the step-children had to keep our eyes wide open to see that none of this second tribe of the babies did not stub their toes and fall, for if they did, and they often did fall, we all knew that a whipping for each one of us was as sure as death or taxpaying.

On one occasion one of the three year old babies came into the kitchen and by some means sat down in a small tub of water. She pounced on to me and beat me until I was marked from head to foot, then she pulled my hair and pinched and twisted my ears, then threw me out in the yard and told me to stay out there. It was in the winter season and was at night and it was

cold. I remained out until I knew she had left the kitchen and I supposed had gone to bed. I then went into the kitchen where I found my two little brothers. I was very cold from having to stay out doors so long and was so filled with grief that I could not speak. I sat on a small chair near the fire and my two little brothers began to express their sympathy for me saying, "Poor little sister it is too bad that she is treated so mean." When to our surprise, stepmother opened the door, saying, "you saucy devils who have the impudence to call me a mean woman," she took a stick and beat both of them in a cruel way. After she had beaten them, she called father and demanded that he should repeat the dose, which he did, without making any investigations whatever, or learning that we were already badly suffering. Shortly afterwards, another one of the babies happened to stumble, and although the child was not hurt in anyway, she beat Willie with a stick until it broke, then she took her shoe off and again beat him with it, striking him in the face and cutting and bruising it in several places. It happened that father was away at that time and none of the children present, excepting myself, to witness that scene. When the boys came from the field, Theodore asked Willie "what was the matter with his face?" Willie being afraid to tell him, would not answer. Theodore than turned and asked me. I told him that stepmother had beaten him in the face with a shoe, he remarked that "that was a pretty thing to whip a child with." Stepmother happened to be near and overheard the conversation, she then ran in and attempted to strike him, but he grabbed her and happened to catch her by the first finger on each hand. She than ordered me to get a switch and I went out and pretended to hunt for one, but as it was night I had a good excuse not to be able to find one.

I returned and told her that I could not find any. She wrenched and pulled so hard trying to get loose

from him that she twisted the skin from off her fingers. She screamed and yelled to the top of her voice, and when she got loose she ran and got a gun declaring she would blow his brains out. She drew the gun on him and pulled the trigger; the cap snapped, but to her disappointment she found the gun was not loaded. Father came home some time during the night and she told him a terrible story about Theodore having attempted to whip her because she corrected Willie for abusing the baby. Father made no investigation as to the truth of her story but rose from his bed early the next morning and punished Willie severely and warned him never to strike his mother again.

CHAPTER VII.

Stepmother never would allow us to claim anything and would not begin to allow us, her step children, to own anything even when any of our uncles or aunts would give us any little presents. She would take the present whatever it was away from us as soon as the donor was gone, and would give it to some of her children. On one occasion one of my uncles who then lived in California, sent me some gold nuggets by a young man who went out there with him, and when the young man gave them to me he told me my uncle Johnithan who I had never seen, and who I might never see sent them to me, and he told me he had had them in his possession for several months, as it took months at that time to make the trip in a covered wagon, that was the only way of making the trip in those days. It is useless to say that I was awful proud of them, but as soon as the young man left step moth-

er took them away from me and said she was going to save them until Ema, her oldest daughter was grown and have a gold ring made of them for her. As I was only a child at the time I have not sufficient language to express the humiliation I felt in the loss of those nuggets. She had no remorse of conscience for any thing she done, and rather gloried in doing mean things to us children.

On another occasion father told my two youngest brothers and myself that if we would gather and prepare some plums, he would take them to market and buy a pound of candy to pay us for our labor. We accepted the proposition and went to work. We worked through rain and sun, early and late. When the plums were ready and father started to market with them. We almost counted the hours that we would have to wait for our candy. When father returned and gave us the candy, step mother immediately took it from us and locked it up in the bureau drawer and would not allow us to have any of it and gave it to her own children.

Uncle Will Johnson made me a present of a pair of nice gloves and quite a number of other little things. Just as soon as he left she took them from me and hid them and forbid me of ever claiming them. She took a little gold locket that one of my uncles had given me before my mother died and hid it and said that I could not have it and that she intended to keep it for her oldest girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

Several years had passed and grandmother's grave had settled and the blue grass was well sodded over it,

and she had not came to haunt my stepmother. In as much as she had not paid her a short visit my step mother decided to venture to move in to the building that grandmother occupied at the time of her death and for several years before. She still had some fears that grandmother might come but she was so anxious to live in that building, she decided to try staying in it one night and thought if she did not come that night she would not likely come at all. After she got her affeets moved into the building my father learned by some means that he had to go away to attend to some business that would detain him over night. When stepmother learned that father would be obliged to remain away from home that night she began to be nervous and lamented that she had moved in that day. When twilight came on she went in the house to light the lamp, but to her terror she found there were no matches in the house, and it being in warm weather there was no fire from which she might make a light, then she became more frightened than ever. "Oh! What shall I do," she cried. "I know the old lady will take advantage of this opportunity, knowing that I am without a light she will come to night if she ever comes at all." She was so excited that she could not eat any supper, but sat out in the yard and trembled until dark. Finally she recovered her presence of mind and ordered Theodore to go to some of the neighbors and get some matches and said that she would remain out doors until he came back, as she was afraid to go in the house for fear grandmother would come. Theodore went for the matches and when he got them he told the people that step mother wanted them so that she could keep a light in her room in order to keep grandmothers ghost from coming to haunt her. They said to him, "if we had known that before we would'nt have given them to you, she deserves to be haunted for treating you orphan children as she does." "Don't give them to her, tell her we had no matches at our house." But Theodore knew she would send him some where

else if he told her that he had not got any there, so he went home and gave the matches to her. She than ordered him to go in and then she went in. She kept the light bnrning all night and could not sleep. When morning came she arose looking as pale and hollow in the face as if she had a long spell of sickness.

One week passed away and grandmother had not made her appearance, so by that time stepmother's fear was quelled, she began to feel herself perfectly safe, so she turned to her old way of fault finding and making herself disagreeable by abusing us children and without a cause as none of us were disobedient. We never disobeyed her in any way. Whenever she whipped any of us it was for some trivial thing that could not be helped. If she found a button off any of our clothes she whipped us for that, when they were found thread-bare she was sure to whip us, often jerking a portion of our hair out of our heads and at other times kicking us with her big number seven feet, which were inclosed in coarse shoes, also often requesting father to repeat the dose on us when he came home. When he would not, she always gave him a piece of her mind. On one occasion when he refused to whip one of the boys she threw up to him that he had not kept his promise with her, saying that he promised before she married him that he would whip the children every time they did not please her. Father emphatically denied the charge, telling her to confine herself to the truth. That made her furious and she raved like a maniac, calling him many vile names for having disputed her word. She used no caution as to what she said or done. She had no respect for anybody's feelings and threatened to leave home. Father told her she might go if she wished, so she threw her shawl around her and put her bonnet on and went to the door as if taking leave and after opening the door and looking out she walked down the path to the gate. She stopped and rested her arms on the gate post oc-

casionally glancing back toward the house. Any intelligent person could readily discern that she was wanting father to come and beg her not to leave home. But alas! She was disappointed for he treated her with silent contempt and when she saw that no one cared if she did go. She appeared to be puzzled, and did not know what to do, she did not want to go and was ashamed to come back without an invitation. As it was a cold, December evening and there being about three inches of snow on the ground she began to get cold. Father went about his business but we watched her manoeuvres without her discoving us. She walked back and forth in front of the gate several times frequently stamping her feet in order to keep them warm. Finally she came back to the house and went in her room. She was so wiped out that she did not know what to do or say. Bedtime came and she retired without a word, but next morning she resumed her customery habit of quarreling.

CHAPTER IX.

In the fall of 1868 father got a chance to trade his farm in Missouri to Mr. Weatherford for six hundred and forty acres of land in Arkansas and \$600 in money. He decided to make the trade as he thought a change of climate would be good for the health of his family and perhaps his wife's temper. So he made the trade, and sold off his household goods, and such stock as he did not wish to take with him. Stepmother protested against going to Arkansas and leaving her mother in Missouri but father told her he intended to,

go and she might stay with her mother if she wanted to. When we were ready to start she soon wanted to know where she was to ride. There were five other families who went with us, making thirty-five in the crowd. It was February 1869 by the time all were ready for the journey. At that time there were no railroads on that route so all had to travel with wagons and teams. We went through Rollo and Montgomery, and crossed the Missouri river at Herman. On the way to the Arkansas line, when we got into Fulton County, we stoped over to rest a day and do some washing. We camped near a hillside where there was a large spring, the ground all around was very stony. The next day the ladies washed, the men went to the woods to hunt deer, while we children amused ourselves killing snakes. We found a great many snakes coiled under the flat rocks near the spring where we got water for the women to wash. We put a kettle on the camp fire to heat water and when it was boiling hot some of us would take a cup of hot water, while others took long rods to pry the rocks and the others would throw the hot water on the snakes. We usually found a half dozen or more under every rock we pried, and they measured from six inches to three feet long. I think we must have killed several hundred and could have killed more if the men had not came in to camp and stopped us. They brought with them a large deer which they had killed and it was a treat to us to see it as we had never seen one. The men dressed the deer and divided the meat between the families. That night the wolves gathered around the camp and howled distressingly. No one thought about them coming to the camp for the venison, but after everybody went to sleep some wolves came and by some means got the cover off the tub in which the venison was and ate all the venison. When we arose next morning we discovered the tracts of the wolves, and found they had eaten

the venison, we were all disappointed in not getting venison for breakfast.

After again starting on our journey we did not stop until at noon when we stopped to lunch. Several men came into our camp when we were eating and all of them were armed with heavy revolvers. In those days it was said that there were a great many desperadoes in that part of Arkansas and from the fact that the men's actions gave cause for suspicion our men suspected them as highway robbers. They made close inquiries as to where we were traveling, where we were from and how long had we been on the road? They then examined our horses and highly complemented them as fine horses. They remained around the camp until we started on our journey again. Our crowd expected the men would follow after them and try to rob them and take some of the best of the horses, but the men in our crowd were all well armed with revolvers which would shoot six or seven times, besides guns in the wagons. When we went into camp that evening and night came on the men folks agreed that they had better stay up all night and guard themselves and teams. They expressed themselves as not being afraid even if the robbers should come, but the women and children were so afraid we would not dare to sleep. Every noise we heard in the brush we imagined the robbers were near. I cannot find words to express our feelings that night. If morning light was ever welcomed by any people on earth it certainly was by us. As no robbers came to molest us we were at ease again, and went on our way rejoicing. That afternoon a terrible hail storm passed over, and no set of men ever got a worse beating then the men in our crowd.

I never saw larger hail stones before or since as those that fell at that time. The men all drove double teams, and the hail fell so thick and fast that the horses became frightened, so the men were compelled to get out of the covered wagons, and held them by the bridle and bits. The storm lasted several minutes but when it ceased, the men were so beaten by the hail stones that their heads, faces and wrists were in a gore of blood. They drove into camp early that evening and dressed their wounds, ate supper and went to bed with sore faces and hands.

Arriving in Arkansas the next day we found but few settlers in that part of the country at that time. In fact, it was almost a wilderness, but what few people we did meet were very clever and said they would gladly welcome us in their neighborhood, as they liked to see the country settling up. It was Saturday evening when we stopped in Arkansas. We camped near the public road and on Sunday we saw the natives going to church. Some of them would stop and talk with us; they told us that they walked four and five miles to church as they had but few horses, and they worked them during the week, so for that reason did not ride them to church. They were dressed in home spun clothes woven in plaids of indigo blue, they appeared to be very religious people and some of them insisted on part of our crowd going to church with them and recited to us the Apostles command, "Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together." Our crowd begged to be excused, saying we were unprepared for church, but we promised them that some of us would go some other time when it was more convenient. There were eighteen girls in our crowd, some of them were grown

young ladies. That evening they all congregated together around the camp fire and sang:

“Yes, my native land I love thee,
All thy scenes I love them well,
Friends, connections, happy country;
Can I say a last farewell?
Home, thy joys are passing
Lovely joy no stranger heart can tell
Scenes of sacred peace and pleasure
Holy days and Sabbath bells.”

When they finished singing the last stanza they all broke down and wept and lamented that they had left home and friends and especially their sweethearts whom they longed so much to see. It was then when these sentiments came to them:

“Oh! carry me back to old Missouri;
Oh, carry me back to Pike
Where Katie may see her sweetheart Roy,
And I may see my Ike,”

The next day the men went out across the country to look over government lands in view of taking home steads. Father did not stop on his own land as none of it was in cultivation, but bought out a Mr. Will Mc Millan’s claim on a piece of land that was ready for cultivation. On this he raised a crop and remained there one year after which he decided to move back to Missouri, so he took his family back, as he decided he could do better on a rented farm in Missouri than he could on his own in Arkansas as it was so far from market. He rented a farm from Mr. Alford and began to make preparations to make a crop the next season.

Soon thereafter two of my mother’s brothers called at the house and asked father to let me go and make my home with Mr. Rastus and Mrs. Letta Readem. My step-mother immediately put in her objections, and insisted on father keeping me at home, but they pleaded so hard with him to let me go. They told him that Mr. and Mrs. Readem were in high circumstances, they

had no children and wanted to make me their heir and would educate me and put me in the very highest, and most aristocratic society. Letta had told them that she was very anxious to educate me and told them to tell my father that she would keep me in school all the time when there was any school near enough to send me to. Finally father consented to let me go on their proffered conditions as they promised. One of them told him that he would come back the next morning for me. My stepmother was so angry that she hardly knew what to do with herself, but I shall give her praise for one thing and that is, she had read Letta's head and features well. She said that Letta Readem was a woman of absolutely the lowest, and most vile principles that could be put in any human being on earth. She told father that "if God had given the devil the privilege of making just one human being on earth, and allowed the devil time to sum up all the mean and blot away all the good, that Letta Readem was the only one on earth the devil had made, and that her designs were to get me for a slave; that she would not do anything whatever, and if he let her have me he would find it to be true." She said, "now if Letta is your sisterinlaw, just please let me call your attention to the shape of Letta's head; a low, narrow forehead, with the ugliest and meanest physiognomy that was ever placed in the head and face of any human being on earth." She said to him "that she would die rather then to let Letta have one of her children, to kill it, and she would intercede for him, for doing the best between the two evils, and that God would forgive him for killing a poor orphan child sooner then to place it in the hands of a fiend that will abuse it to death, and never speak a kind word to it." But when she saw she had no influence over him, she tried another scheme. by telling him that "if he would not listen to her persuasion and was determined to let a brute have his child, she would not allow me to come back,

no matter what the circumstances might be, and if I ever came back she would kill me." "I warn you now" she said, "and will make my word good, as sure as you let her go." "If she ever comes back I will murder her, for I know that if she lives with Letta Readem one year she will know all kinds of meanness; that face of Letta's shows that she would instill all kinds of evil on the mind of a child, besides she will treat her worse than negroes were ever treated in slavery days."

Uncle Charlie came next morning after me, she said to him. "I will venture to say that Lucy will regret that she went to live with Letta before she is there one year." "Oh no, she won't" said Uncle Charles. "Letta is a good Christian woman, and her husband is a Christian too. They hold family prayers every Sunday morning and I am sure they will do exactly as they say; Letta will not make a slave of her for she keeps a woman hired to work and will continue to do so." "She will make little Lucy her heir and educate her as she says she will." His speech was so flowery that he succeeded in getting father's complete consent and when stepmother saw that her protests were useless she began to gather my clothes together, and while she was dressing me she slapped my face, first on one side then the other all to gratify her anger, but by the time she got me ready she was over her mad spell and when we started she put her arms around me and kissed me and told me that I was a good little girl and she hoped I should remain so. I bade my brothers and my little half-sisters goodbye, then uncle Charlie put me on a horse and we started on the journey to grandmother Johnson's home. It was about thirty miles from father's to grandmother's home and we were all day on the road.

My life up to that time had been but very little pleasure to me. I was then ten years old, and knew but little of anything except threatenings and whippings and had often been kicked and knocked down by

my stepmother, but I will give her credit for sometimes praising and speaking kindly to me a few times. I will also credit her for never speaking vulgar language in my hearing.

My uncle talked to me most all day, as we journeyed along, telling me what a nice and happy home I would have with Aunt Letta, how good and kind she would be to me and would educate and dress me nicely, and put me in the best society, and I would be their heir and would not have to be abused any more by my step-mother, nor have my feelings wounded by hearing my mother's people called old black republicans. I was greatly animated with the thoughts of getting a home where I would be treated kindly and sent to school.

It was a rough road over which we had to travel, and twilight was dawning when we reached grand mother's house. When we rode up to the gate there were several carriages and vehicles of different kinds there. Little Jennie Johnson came out to the gate to meet us and uncle Charlie asked her, "Why there were so many vehicles there." She replied, "Little George McLoud had died the evening before, and they had brought him there for burial." Little Jennie lead me into the house and offered me a seat. There were several ladies in the room but I did not know any of them as I had not seen any of my mother's sisters since her death. I noticed one of them sitting with her head bowed down and was weeping. I knew by that, that she was my aunt Maria McCloud, as it was her child that had died. As I glanced around the room I noticed a woman seated in the corner and when I caught the expression on her countenance I fairly shuddered, "Oh! Oh! I thought to myself, I fear that, that is Aunt Letta, for she has the very features that stepmother described." "Oh! I do hope I am mistaken but I fear I am not." She looked mean and lazy. I wished I had not came. I fairly trembled with dread. After awhile

my grandmother came in the room, and as she came near me she asked me if I was little Lucy Pierce. I answered her that I was, then she said "I am your grandmother." "Come with me and I will introduce you to your aunts and other ladies." She took me around the room and gave me an introduction to them. They all received me kindly, and some of them spoke endearing words to me except Aunt Letta. When we came to her grandmother said, "this is your aunt Letta, the aunt you are going to live with" and she never extended her hand to me, but barely nodded her head, and in a very cold and indifferent way she said, "How do you do." I felt as if I would sink to the floor. Ah, how my stepmothers words rang through my ears, but I dared not go back now, I thought my stepmother would kill me. I wished with all my heart that father had listened to my stepmother's warning to him, and begging him to see aunt Letta once more and notice her head and features; to try to solve the great problem of whether he could afford to place his poor little orphan girl in the care and charge of a being that had the head and features of an idiot, who could not possibly possess any principles much less to raise a child. We were then called to supper, my grandmother went with me to the dining room and seated me at the table. Letta was seated on the opposite side of the table facing me. She looked so surly at me that I felt so broken-hearted I could hardly eat my supper. I was so ill at ease, I feared the balance of the folks would notice it and speak to me about it. One lady did ask me, "why I did not eat more?" I was so nervous I could hardly answer her, but I managed to tell her that I was not hungry, and really I was not then. When I first arrived at grandmother's I felt as if I could eat two suppers, but when I got sight of Letta my hunger left me.

Bedtime came and a half dozen little girls invited me to go up stairs with them where we were to sleep.

I went with them and when we got up to the room, they began to talk to me and told me how glad they were that I had got away from my stepmother, as they had heard how cruel she had treated me. They told me that I would have a good home with Aunt Letta, that she would be good to me, send me to school and take me to church every Sunday. I tried to hope it would be that way, but something kept whispering to me that they were honestly mistaken. Next morning grandmother came to me and asked me to go with her to the graveyard. I went with her and as we walked down the path that lead through the meadow to the graveyard she talked to me concerning my future life. She, like the little girls, said I would have a happy home with Aunt Letta, and gave me some motherly advice telling me that I must go to school next day, and that I would soon get acquainted with the little girls at school and I would be happy. Then she began to tell me about what a good Christian woman Letta was, that she read the bible every day, and she and Rastus held family prayers every Sunday morning. When we reached the graveyard she lead me to my mother's grave first. "This is your mother's grave," she said, "you're mother is in heaven now waiting for you, and you must try to be prepared to meet her by and by, your aunt Letta will be a mother to you," she said, "and you will be happy." I listened in silence, until she said, "you will be happy," then I replied to her by saying, I hope I will. I felt the influence of Letta's vicious countenance too deeply to think that she would try and make me happy. My weak nerves had already been injured to a great extent, by the abuse my step mother had heaped upon me. For that reason I could not revive my spirits enough to tell her that I was not pleased with aunt Letta's appearance, but I could do nothing more than to go and endure her as stepmother would kill me if I went back. I hoped I would like aunt Letta better on closer acquaintance. After

we had visited all the graves we returned to the house, and as Letta and Rastus were then ready to start home, we went out to the gate, and grandmother showed me which vehicle to get in. Letta had not a word to say to me so far but she and Rastus came and got in and started home.

It was eight miles from grandmother's to Letta's and she never spoke a word to me until we had travelled five miles. Rastus stopped at a farm house to get a cook stove which he had bought. While he was in the house, she said to me, "Can you cook?" I then told her that I had helped my stepmother cook. She then asked me, "Can you milk cows?" I answered that I had never done any milking, then she said to me, "Well I am taking you home with me to work, and you have got to cook, wash dishes, milk cows, wash and iron clothes, sweep the yard, carry off trash, carry out slops, work the garden, and do everything else we want you to do; if you don't I will whip you, if you ever dare to try to get away from us, we will follow you and beat you to death; we keep a gun loaded all the time and will fill you full of bullet holes if you ever tell anybody that we are not good to you; you have got to tell people that you like us, whether you do or not." "I warn you now that if you do tell anybody we will find it out and what will betide you?" Everybody in the whole country are our relatives, either by blood or marriage, and if you tell anybody they will tell us, and we will be sure to kill you." "If anybody ever asks you if we are mean to you; you should say no, and if they ask if we whip you, say, 'not only when you deserve.'" "Now I warn you again, to bridle your tongue, for I mean what I say, when I tell you that we will shoot you before we will allow you to tell anything on us." Oh! How my whole body trembled. Oh! how I wished that I had never been born, or have died before I got to grandmothers. The day before I wandered if uncle Charlie knew that she was so mean,

and had knowingly put me in the hands of a fiend. If he did, I thought to my self, he is as mean as she is. Then my stepmother's words came ringing in my ears again "that Letta was the meanest woman in the family, or in the world, and that she was mean enough to do anything. When Rastus and the other man came with the stove she hushed talking to me and began to find fault with the stove and told Rastus that he had paid too much for it; he argued his side of the case, and from that they both became very hostile, each threatening to throw the other out of the wagon. When they run out of anything to say about the stove, they brought up another quarrel about some lard in a bucket at home. They never ceased their quarreling till we got home. When Rastus drove up to the gate, she and I got out, and when we got in the yard she said to me, "There is the wood pile," and pointed to a pile of wood, "go, get a big armful, and take it in the house and make a fire to get supper with." I took the wood in the house and made a fire in the stove. She then said "go to the well and get a bucket of water." After getting the water she said, "now get a piece of bacon out of that box and cut two or three slices, put the coffee pot on the stove, heat that coffee that I made day before yesterday, put the skillet on and fry that bacon, and while it is frying set the table." When I got that done we ate supper. Then she said, "now get that bucket and cup there, and go out yonder and milk that cow." I went out to the cow lot but as soon as the cow saw me, she knew that I was a stranger and as she was not gentle, would not let me come near her. Rastus came and hemmed her in a corner of the fence, and I went up to her, and attempted to milk, but as I had never milked in my life did not know how to handle a cow. She kicked me down and then Rastus took the cup and milked her. When he got through, I took the milk to the house and Letta told me to strain it, and then wash the dishes. She told me to go and carry in

stove wood and water to get breakfast with, afterwards we all went to bed.

The next morning she called me at 4 o'clock, and told me to go to the kitchen and get breakfast. When breakfast was ready she was yet in bed asleep. Rastus came in from feeding the stock, and it took him about ahalf hour to get her out of bed, and when she did get up it took another half hour for her to put her clothes on, but finaly they came to the table and as soon as Rastus was through asking a blessing they began quarreling again. The quarrel was concerning which one of the fields he should plant corn in, that season. "You are like old Mrs. Ross" he said "you want to wear the breeches, and I am to wear them if I can, and you shan't wear them if you are three or four years the oldest," "I don,t want to wear your breeches," she said, "but the spirits told me and they never lie, that if you did not obey me and plant the corn where I tell you to plant it, you will have bad luck." "Now, there it is again" he cried, "the spirits say that I must obey you." "What do they know about my business, I will not listen to any such 'tom-foolery' as that spiritualism." "What do the spirits know about planting corn and sowing clover seed?" "You need not think that you can work that kind of a lie and scheme on me in order that you may rule me." Letta straightened her shoulders and raised her hand and said, "Rastus you commit a great sin, in opposing me in the way you do, for it is as true as you sit on that chair that I can prophesy the same as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did and when you dispute that I cannot prophesy, you belie Christ, for He said that, 'others would follow Him that were greater then He was,' and I am one of his followers." Rastus then grabbed a cup and bucket and went out to milk the cows, while I washed the dishes. When he got the cows milked he called me to come and carry the milk in the house. I brought the milk to the house and

strained and put it on the shelves, where the milk was usually kept. When I returned to get the last jar of milk to put on the shelf, one of their dogs (of which they had half a dozen, and were always allowed in the house) drank out of the milk. I wanted to throw the milk away but she objected on the grounds that she could not afford to waste the milk if a dog had drank out of it. That night she ordered me to skim it for supper. I obeyed her orders and while we were at the supper table she and Rastus partook and drank freely of it but I did not take any. When she saw that I had not drank any of the milk, I answered her that I did not want any milk, then she said to me, "I have drank of it, and you shall drink it too; it is good enough for you or anybody else." She then poured some of it in a glass and set it by my plate and said to me, "now you drink that, you wench, or I will stomp you!" I refused and Rastus asked her why I did not want to drink it, she replied, "Only because a dog drank of it." Both of them ordered me to drink but I persistently refused, then Rastus arose from the table and got a club and they came and stood by me with raised weapons, and stormed at me with threatenings, repeatedly ordering me to drink the milk. Though I was only a child ten years of age, my stomach revolted so that I could not drink milk after seeing a nasty looking dog drink out of it, in his way of lapping it up with slobbers dropping from his mouth in the milk. After calling me many vile names, when they saw I would not drink the milk, they left me and went in the sittng room and shut the door between them and me. I over-heard Rastus tell Letta that he would have held me by the hair of my head and forced me to drink it if it had not been that he saw one of the hired hands standing outside watching them through the window. He knew that the man would tell it out where the neighbors would hear it. He said that he knew it would not do for the public to know how they treated me and they

must be very careful and not let any person find out anything.

The next morning she came to me and said, "Now look here Lou, if Albert tells anybody about us trying to force you to drink that milk last night, and anybody asks you about it you shall tell them that it is a lie, and say that we would not do such a thing." "Now you had better not tell anyone that it is true; if you do we will kill you, no one will ever know we done it." "I will tell you now that you had better never disobey me again, and you have got to eat and drink whatever we tell you to."

CHAPTER X.

I had been with Letta and Rastus five months and there had been nothing said about starting me to school. One day one of my uncles called on Letta and asked her why she had not started me to school? She told him that she had been sick and was compelled to keep me at home to help her. She had not been sick and he knew it, and said, "Letta you ought to send her to school." When he was gone I heard her say to Rastus, "that she had better let me go to school a few days, so that she could tell people that she did send me to school, and they would not know but what she let me go regularly so they would not talk about her. She went and hunted up an old third reader, which had nearly all the lessons torn out of it, that was the only book she gave me to take to school. When I got to school the teacher, Miss McLane objected to the book, and told me to tell my aunt Letta that I would have to have other books, and that the

book she gave me was of no use. So I had to venture to tell the teacher that I could not afford to tell aunt Letta anything. She said, "Well Lucy I feel sorry for you, I will see if I can make arrangements with some of the other little girls to let you use their books." She made arrangements for me; I went to school about two weeks when Letta stopped me from going. The school was nearly out when uncle Charlie came to see us and while he was there he asked me if I was going to school. I answered him that, I was not. "Have you not been going?" he asked. I went about two weeks, I replied. I had hardly got the words out of my mouth, when Letta quickly stepped in the room and disputed my word, saying, "you went three months." She immediately ordered me to go and bring a turn of stove wood at the same time giving a very vicious look with those desperate looking eyes of hers. I started for the wood and she followed me. When she overtook me she began to abuse me saying, "you wench! Have I not told you that we did not allow you to tell anything, you know people will talk about us for not sending you to school and you told him purposely to make him think we are mean to you." "You wretch you!" Besides calling me a wretch and wench she called me many other vile names and used other names, too vile and indecent for publication. She ended her abuse by telling me that she would murder me, if I ever told anybody again, that I only went to school two week.

The next morning was Sunday and they held family prayer. The next thing was to hurry through with breakfast and get ready for church, as they never failed to go to church when there was a meeting to attend. As she was a Baptist and he a Methodist, there was a meeting at one or the other churches every Sunday. When it was Methodist meeting day, Rastus always rousted everybody on the place out early, so as they would be ready on time to go to the Methodist meeting.

As soon as he awoke on Sunday morning, he would call out. "Get up, everybody right now and hurry and get the work done so you can go to meeting." "Blame it all, be quick or we won't get there in time to hear the text." When all hands were already working as fast as they could, he would storm out at us, "Why in thunder don't you hurry?" "Confound you! If you don't work faster the preacher will be preaching when we get there." "Blast the luck! Why don't you run." That is the way we were entertained until breakfast was ready and then he called everybody, hired hands and all, into family prayer. As soon as he was through with his farce of a prayer he would begin the same racket and keep it up until we got started to the Methodist church. We nearly always got to church before the doors were opened and when we went in side he would require all of us to sit in the amen corner, as the old time folks used to call it, and he always seated himself on the left side of the corner, where the audience could have a full view of his face. He always put on a sad expression and his face always looked two inches longer, while he was in the Methodist meeting house than it did at any other time. He usually tried to lead in song, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross," or, "Oh, for a Closer Walk With God." If we did not sing loud we were sure to hear from him as soon as we got home.

When the Sunday came that the Baptist had meeting he always objected to any of us going to the "blamed old Baptist church" as he called it, and he and Letta would enter into a quarrel and keep it up until they got to church. As most everybody knew that Rastus was a praying man, the minister always called on him to pray, and he always granted the request, and generally prayed for all from the president down to the pauper in the poor house, asking the Lord to touch and tender their hearts, and enable them to cast away every sin that did so easily beset them. Also asking the Lord to enable him to keep on the breast

plate of righteousness, that he might be able to withstand the firey darts of the wicked one. As soon as services were over he and Letta would start home, and when they got away from the crowd so they could not be heard they would begin a quarrel by saying that "he thought the blamed old Baptist preacher had a sight of impudence to ask him to pray in the confounded old Baptist church." They usually kept up the quarrel most of the time during the week whenever they were together, unless some of the neighbors happened to be near. They never allowed anyone outside of the family to hear them quarrelling, if they could help it. They often made such a disturbance quarrelling through the night that the hired hands could not sleep as they would usually quarrel till twelve or one o'clock in the night, and often till three o'clock in the morning and by that time all the hired hands were so nervous that they could not sleep. Letta would often come to me the next day after she and he had quarreled nearly all night she said, "Lou, if you ever tell anybody about us quarreling, we will whip you, for if people knew that we quarreled they would say that we were not good Christians." When she had occasion to send me on an errand, she would never fail to say, "now remember to bridle your tongue and if you tell any thing that we have said or done we will hear of it, for I will ask and they will tell me, if we do learn of you telling, we tell you, you will never tell anything again." As soon as I got back the first thing she would say was, "well did they ask you anything?" or "what did they say to you?"

On one occasion she sent me to her sister, Maria McLoud's, I don't remember now what she sent me after, but while I was there Maria asked me what Letta was doing. As Letta seldom ever done anything except to lounge around and quarrel what time she was not asleep. As she was lying down when I started from her house I answered her that Letta was not do-

ing anything. Maria remarked that Letta must have a mighty good time if she could afford to lay around and do nothing. When I went back Letta asked me if Maria had asked me anything. I told her, yes, that she asked what she was doing? Then she asked me what I told her, I answered her by telling her that she was lying down. Then she flew at me like a panther and with uplifted hands saying, "you trifling heifer, you, why did you tell her that." I replied, well you were lying down when I left. "You should have told her that I was hoeing in the garden, you hateful limbo!" "You want to make people think that I am lazy, you wretch, you!" She went to Maria that afternoon and told her that she had been working in the garden all the forenoon and that she was very tired from the affects of it. She always worked schemes like that to deceive her relations and neighbors.

CHAPTER XI.

It had been twelve months since there had been a religious revival at Nally's Chapel and Mr. Holland who was pastor at that time at the chapel announced that he would begin a series of meetings at that place commencing the next Sunday. Rastus rushed everybody around on the place all week trying to get the work arranged so that all might be able to attend the Methodist protracted meeting. While the meeting was going on he always went in the wagon during the week and took the family and would invite the neighbors to go along with us. He was so excited about the Methodist meeting that he ran around like some one that was half crazy, rushing the balance of us so that we could hardly get our clothes on straight. On one occasion

he drove up to the gate with the wagon and squalled out at Letta and me saying, "Blame it all! aren't you ready?" "Yes, about" said Letta. "Confound it I will go and leave you," he said, and he whipped the horses and was gone before we could get our bonnets on our heads but when he got to the next neighbors he remembered that he had invited them to go along, so he turned around and came back for us, and as we thought he had gone to church, we had taken our jackets off. When he drove back to the gate the second time he yelled out, "Come on now, thunderation! what makes you so slow?" When we got to the gate, Letta said to him, "Why didn't you go on to the church?" He said "now you know that Love's folks promised to go and I didn't want to tell them that I had left you at home, and when they knew you were going because they would talk about it. By the time he drove to Mr. Love's house again they had decided that we were not coming by for them, and so had taken off their go-to-meeting clothes and decided they would not go, so went on to church and quarreled all the way. When we got in church he put on a long face as usual and sang one of his long meter songs, and prayed a long tremulous prayer. When church was over he abused us on the road home, and until midnight.

Next day was Sunday, and he hurried everybody around so fast that he did not let the hired hands have time to clean off his old top buggy after running it out from under the shed where the chickens had roosted on top of it all the week, so we would all go trotting along the road so fast that some of the hired hands that he could prevail on to ride some of the horses along behind the buggy. Finally one of them told him that they would not go with him to the Methodist meeting any more unless he would allow them to take along a sack and shovel to save up the fertilizer as it fell off the buggy as he drove along ahead, upon which he rebuked them for not trying to be religious, but they had

ahswered him that they thought there was as much religion in trying to save the fertilizer as there was in a man and wife quarreling all the week and then calling the hired help in to hear family prayers on Sunday morning and then hurry them off to meeting so fast that he could not allow them time to scrape off, and save the fertilizer that the chickens had so kindly deposited on top of his buggy. That made him so mad; he would not hold family prayers the next Sunday, nor for several Sundays after, but he and his wife continued their quarrels about the two churches, each declaring that the other church was only an institution for people to go to hell from.

Finally one of Rastus sisters, who had married a man of the Babtist faith, as Rastus was one of the stuards in the Methodist church, she asked him to procure a letter of recomendation for her. Rastus was so hostile about her leaving the Methodist church to join the Baptist. When the church granted the letter it was left with Rastus to write the letter of recommendation he would not word it so as to recommend her to the Baptist church, but she took the piece of writing from him and cast it in the fire, and when she united with the Baptist church she related the circumstances to the church. They received her into their fellowship on her own statement. When Rastus heard of it he was so mad about it that he raved like a maniac, and said that his parents would be doing right to disinherit her for disgracing the family by joining the Baptist church and also said that he would like to sink all the Baptist in the bottom of the sea, as they were causing more people to go to the devil then any other church on earth. When he found out what day she was to be immersed he positively forbid any of the horses to be used to take any of us to such an absurd and disgraceful thing as baptism in a stream of water, but Letta out-general him that time and had some of the hired hands to harness the horses in spite of his objections. Letta

and myself went to see her and some others baptized. We left Rastus at home but when we returned home he had disappeared, and remained away from home all night. Letta had made up her mind that she had no Rastus any more, but to her surprise he came sneaking in the next morning with his lip hanging down, with a morose looking contenance, on account of the disgrace as he called it of his sister joining the blamed, old, bigoted, self conceited, hell feeding Baptist church "Just to think" said Rastus "of Cynthy, his sister having the audacity to ask him to procure a letter of recommendation from the pure and undefiled Methodist church to go to the low down Baptist, I can never forgive her he said, but I will cling the closer to the Methodist for that, and show them that I will not disgrace them by going with the Baptist."

Soon thereafter the Methodist quarterly conference was in session at the Nally Chapel. We had attended until work at home had got so far behind that Letta ordered that I should stay at home and work; and as she always pretended to be sick except at meal time, there was no one to work but me, and she would not go, for if she had gone there would have been no one at home to abuse and quarrel at me, so it left no one at home to go except Rastus. When he learned that we were not going he got so mad that he kicked over the chairs and upset the furniture at such might as to break the glass out of the windows and I was in one of the adjoining rooms and heard the crashing as if the side of the house was falling in so I ran to the door and upon opening it he cast his ferocious eyes at me and grabbed an earthen mug, that I suppose would weigh a pound and ahalf and threw it at me. I dodged the mug and ran but I heard the crashing of chairs behind me. I fled to the orchard and hid among the high weeds, as I did not wish to be crippled, and I knew if I got hurt I would have to pay all expenses for medical aid and they would want me to pay my board while

sick from the injuries he might inflict on me, as Letta before tried to make me pay for things that got broken by her own carelessness.

On one occasion she ordered the churn placed near the fire and the milk and churn being cold and the heat from the fire caused the churn to crack and she tried to make me pay for it. A few days later she put some napkins in a closet where there were some fruit cans and one of the cans bursted and stained nearly all of the napkins and she tried to make me pay for them. She had a cheap home made bird cage in which she had kept a bird, but as the bird was dead she set the cage out on a bench in the back yard, the wind blew it off from the bench and broke it and she even tried to make me pay for the cage.

I had been a slave for them for four years and I was then fourteen years old and being forced to work in all kinds of weather without sufficient clothing, I was taken sick and as I had not forgotten the cruel way in which she had treated me during my sickness before, I did not wish to encounter any more trouble of that kind as long as life lasted me. While I was very sick she forced me to work until I fainted and fell to the floor, then she abused me with vile language and said that she did not believe that I was too sick to work and ordered me to get up and go to work saying that she did not care if I was sick and that I should not stop work on account of being a little sick. I could not work any longer as I had a tremendous high fever caused from inflammatory rheumatism, from which my limbs were then so badly swollen that I had scarcely been able to walk for several days. When she saw that I could not work any longer she told me that I could not have a doctor unless I payed the doctor bill myself, which I did. She then went and hired a girl to do the work in my place, and then complained to me for having to hire a girl at one dollar a week, and said that I ought to pay the hired girl her wages.

I had an exceedingly high fever for more than three weeks and every time I asked Letta for a drink of water she complained at me saying that I was too much bother, and most of the time she would not give me any water, although the doctor told her I was parching with a burning fever. When I had been sick for a few weeks my hair had not been combed at all and I asked her if she would comb my hair for me and she said "no I wont comb your old hair." I was confined to the bed for five weeks in which time I grew so weak that I could not raise my head from the pillow, but nevertheless she came to my bed side nearly every day and scolded me because I was not able to work and said it was my fault that she had to hire a girl. She never prepared any food for me that a sick person should have, but gave me salt pork and nearly all fat at that and some cabbage and corn bread and then she would say that I could eat that or starve. She said that she did not intend to kill any of her chickens to make soup for me. She threatened to slap me if I did not sit up in bed every day in order, as she said, to gain my strength so I could do the cooking and domestic work so she would not have to pay a girl one dollar a week.

I think I would have died during that spell of sickness if it had not been for the tender mercies of the hired girl. She knew that Letta was cruel to me and for that reason she did all she could to comfort me, but before I was strong enough to walk across the floor without holding to the furniture, she discharged the girl and forced me to do the house work and cooking. My nerves were so weak from being sick and abused by Letta and Rastus, that I was so afraid of them I pulled myself around trying to do the house-work by holding to the furniture as I passed around the rooms for a few days. Finally I relapsed and got down sick in bed again but during the few days that I was trying to do the work, Letta would follow me

around and say to me. "Hurry up, work faster or I will whip you, you wretch you." "Here you have been laying around for six or seven weeks not working, and now you shall make up for lost time, you heifer, you." After I got down in bed the second time I never asked any favors of her as I knew it was unless and I would only be abused for asking her to do anything for me.

My reader can readily understand why I ran to keep from being hurt while Rastus was in his religious tantrum, throwing the chairs about and upsetting the furniture. But I must go back to my text of when I run and hid in the weeds. Finally when Rastus found that I had to stay at home to work and Letta stayed at home to abuse me he decided to go to church by himself. So he went on to church and when I found that he had gone I came out from among the weeds and resumed my daily avocations. It being Saturday I had a great deal of work to do and did not get a chance to straighten the furniture around in the room before he returned from church with the preacher and as he supposed I had put the room in order again he lead the preacher right in the room without making any investigation. You ought to have seen that preacher's eyes, how angry he looked when he stepped into that room, and said, "Why Brother Readem has there been a cyclone here." Rastus replied saying, "It looks very much like there had," and to blind the preacher he further told him that we were cleaning house, and that accounted for the room being disarranged. Anyone could see by the expression the minister had on his face that he was not fully satisfied with the explanation but he had been two well raised to ask any impertinent questions. Rastus tried to hide his anger while he was in the presence of the preacher, but every time he met me out in the back yard or any place where he thought the preacher would not hear him he would say to me. "Why in the deuce didn't you straighten up that room?"

You left it that way on purpose to let the preacher see it, you want to get me talked about; now I tell you, you had better never do that way again." I managed to get the room in order again before night, while Rastus and Letta tried to entertain the preacher in the parlor. All was pretty quiet as long as the preacher remained, and after tea all the family had to go to church, as we all knew that Rastus was liable to do something desperate if we attempted to remain at home.

The next morning was Sunday morning and family prayer was resumed, and then everybody on the place, hired hands and all were rushed off to the Methodist quarterly meeting, and as Rastus was one of the class leaders, and a partaker of love feasts, it was necessary to get to church early in order to get into the feast, otherwise the doors would be locked and we could not get in. We got to church on time and Rastus entertained the audience with a long flowery speech, entreating all to prepare to meet him in the upper Kingdom where all was love, and hypocrites as I say, never come to molest, and where no tears were shed. While we were on the way home he started up a quarrel about religion and they kept it up most of the time the balance of the week. Nevertheless when Sunday came family prayer was resumed. They always waited till breakfast was pronounced ready and then the family and all the hired hands called in to kneel in family devotion. Finally the hired help became so disgusted with so much of their hypocrisy that they would slip off where they could not be seen to be called to prayer, but could hear plainly enough when breakfast was called. As I was one of the family I had to stay and kneel with them in family prayer, though I was and had a right to be, living several years in their experience in their hypocrisy, as badly disgusted as the hired help. I had no respect for their religion, as I well knew that they did not possess what they professed to, but were only what Christ, when he was here on

earth, called wolves in sheep's clothing.

Sometime during the years of such Sunday devotions, hypocrisy quarreling and worse then foolishness, they somewhere got in possession of a puppy, which was a cross between a cur and a shepherd. The puppy was a perfect beauty with coal black hair, and eyes like two black beads. He was the most mischievous puppy that I ever saw; as the puppy grew up he was taught to take hold of anything; or any person, that anybody pointed their finger at, whatever the object happened to be. As I previously stated they allowed their dogs to be in the house at any and all times and as I said before I had no respect for their hypocrisy I always managed to get a seat in front facing them and when they would kneel down they would have their backs toward me. The little puppy was always on hand and his little bright eyes never escaped seeing any motion that anyone made. When prayer was called I always managed to have the puppy near me, so that when the farce began I would have no trouble in attracting the puppy's attention. When Rastus got in a deep way of prayer I would point my finger at the puppy and then at him and the puppy would run to him, take him by the coat tail and shake and growl and let go and bark and catch him by the heels of his boots, knaw, growl and jump up and get him by the collar of his coat and shake and growl, but nothing could have broke his chain of prayer that he had so often repeated in such solemn tones, until he reached the amen, and as soon as they were off of their knees the same old quarrel between themselves continued which only ceased while in church or in the presence of people that they did not want to find out what miserable hypocrites they were.

Notwithstahding they knew that I knew they were fiends, they had the nerves to quote the golden text to me, "Whatsoever you would that men do unto you, do ye even so to them." They tried to impress upon my

mind that I must "return good for evil; and that by so doing I would heap coals of fire upon the heads of those that did me wrong," but I never noticed any fire on their heads, though I did good to them every day, and I never received a pleasant word from them. I guess their heads were too green to burn. The Scripture further says "The stream cannon bring both bitter and sweet, and the tree is known by its fruit," it farther says, "Let your light so shine that others seeing your good works may be constrained to follow after you." It also says, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devils," and I can say in truth that during the time I lived with them I never knew anything to proceed from their mouths but bitterness, destruction and misery was in their way. The ways of peace they never knew, and from the way they conducted themselves, I judge there was no fear of God before their eyes.

On several occasions I heard them relate their experience when they were trying to get religion, as they called it. They said that they felt that they were the meanest people on earth and that they felt that way for more then three weeks before the Lord would change them. They said that when the change was made, there was a great change. I think they might have felt that they were the worst people on earth, for if they were any worse before the change then they had been since they had great reason to feel that way and I will go ten to one that they are still the meanest people on earth. The change must have been so small as to be microscopical.

CHAPTER XII.

Notwithstanding they were so devoted to family prayer on Sunday mornings, Rastus was exceedingly

fond of strong drink, so much so that even hard cider stood no show when in his path. He would make his path exceedingly crooked to run across where he knew it was, before I was aware that he was so well advanced and skilled in making crooked paths in the direction of hard cider barrels. At times Letta would order him to buy barrels of hard cider to make vinegar to which mandate he was exceedingly ready to conform; but to her great surprise the barrel would soon be empty. If more than one barrel of cider was bought at a time there would be in time the same number of empty barrels, and the cider never got too sour to continue to disappear as long as there was any in the barrels. Even vinegar with a little sugar was one of the best things he ever tried, as he said, for sour stomach, and even if we prepared camphor, or even assafoetida or anything for medical purposes; if he learned it had any alcohol or whiskey in it, he would frame up excuses for drinking them by saying his head ached, or he had pain in his stomach. He always managed to have a pain as long as the bitters or camphor lasted.

I was the general and only domestic and I would often find bottles where he had hid them in secreted places, sometimes in the bottom of the wardrobe in the dressing room, at other times in the cellar behind the soap grease barrels. The bottles were nearly always partly filled with whiskey and I never dared to mention it to anyone, as I knew that he was mean enough to deny it. Even Letta would dispute it, though she knew it to be true, but in order to deceive any person who might hear of his drinking.

On one occasion, on the farm, I noticed that he was visiting the cellar quite often, and I decided to make an investigation as to what kind of business called him to the cellar so often and when I searched around I found a quart bottle half full of whiskey. It was hid in the corner of the cellar, under a barrel which held the home made soap, I said nothing about it, then a

few days later I made another inspection, and found bottle was empty. I still kept quiet and thought I would notice his movements after the bottle had run dry; then the Christian-hearted Rastus had urgent business to go to town (Louisiana.) When he was ready to start he laid his coat on his arm and walked down in the cellar and when he came out and started to town I went in the cellar and looked for the bottle, but it had disappeared. Soon after he returned home I went in the cellar and found that the bottle was again nearly full of good old "Oh! be joyful." Again Rastus often had special business in the cellar. Still every Sunday morning we were called upon to kneel in solemn devotion while Rastus seemed to be especially inspired, enlivened and better supplied with words from his cellar going language to express his best wishes and entreaties for our better and more Christian life in this world and in the end a safe arrival in the upper world to endlessly walk the golden streets of the celestial New Jerusalem.

Then upon another occasion Letta found a jug of whiskey in their horselot hid under a pile of rails. Rastus happened to be with her and she accused him of being the owner of it and hiding it there, but he emphatically denied knowing any thing about it, and told her that he supposed it belonged to some of the hired hands. Letta pretended to me, that she believed his story.

At another time while I was looking for eggs I found a jug of whiskey in the hay loft and as I knew he would deny knowing anything about it I poured it out. I then noticed his expression the time he returned from the barn loft and to say that his appearance was of a disappointed nature is putting it mild. Next morning he had urgent business to town. I decided to tell Letta about finding the jug of whiskey in the hay loft. I was satisfied she would try and deny it for Rastus and try and hunt some scrape goat to lay the charge

to. However I told her and she immediately accused Bill Baxter of drinking it. Sometime after that Letta told some of the neighbors that Bill Baxter was a drunken scamp and that he kept whiskey in the hay loft while Rastus had him in his employment. Letta was always ready to smuggle any kind of a wrong that Rastus committed even when she knew he was guilty. As she wanted the public to have confidence in him, and knowing that by her lying for him she would cover up a multitude of sins, from the eyes of the people. By so doing he would have a better chance to borrow money and dead beat his creditors out of what he already owed and all he could borrow. For that reason when I found the jug of whiskey she sheltered him under Bill Baxter.

The story soon reached Bill Baxter's ears that Letta had accused him of owning the jug of whiskey in the hay-loft. Bill was very indignant upon hearing the story and called at the house to see Letta about it, but when he came there was no one at home excepting myself. "I understand" said Bill, "that your aunt Letta accuses me of having kept whiskey in the hay-loft, I want you to tell her for me that she had better know what she is talking about before she wags her tongue so much, and as to the whiskey that she had reference to in the hay-loft, belonged to Rastus. I never tasted of it but once and then Rastus gave it to me. I would not drink it because it was not fit for anybody to drink it that wanted to be half-way respectable, but that was the kind that Rastus always drank." He then said that Rastus drank more or less every day; and if Letta did not know it she was very stupid. Bill insisted that I should tell Letta exactly what he said, and when she came home I did so. Letta kept pretty quiet about it until Rastus came in from the field and when he did come she lectured him saying, "now Rastus ain't that a nice way for you to do, buy old rot gut whiskey and hide it in the hay-loft." Rastus emphatically denied

knowing anything about the whiskey and asked, "Who told you I hid whiskey in the barn-loft?" When she told him that Bill Baxter had said so, he denied it more vigorously with threatenings to whip Bill the first time he met him.

Soon thereafter he happened to meet Bill Baxter and he thought Bill had heard that he had threatened to whip him and for fear Bill would call upon him for a whipping and being afraid of Bill anyway from the way Bill had taken him to task on a previous occasion. He walked up to Bill and politely said, "Bill I owe you an apology." "For what" asked Bill, "for drinking rot gut whiskey, and to get out of it deceive your wife by telling her that I was the fellow that drank the whiskey, while you drank a better quality?" Without letting him have time to answer, Bill said, "Well Rastus I grant pardon to any man when he has to lie like you do to your wife to keep her from knowing that he would drink such whiskey as you do, especially when he has to continually lie to his wife to keep her from believing too strongly that he keeps his whiskey hid out around the barn. You probably have not forgotten the time I happened to see you as you drew your bottle out from under a setting hen, and your wife came so near catching you, that when she asked you what you was doing in the chicken house, you said you thought it was nearly time for the eggs to hatch, and she reminded you of the fact that they had only been set the day before. Now, Rastus, you know as well as I do, the predicament you are in, and I freely forgive you, and I will further grant you liberty to tell your wife that it was me, and not you, that was half drunk the other day when you put your whiskey under the setting hen to hatch excuses with which to fool your wife. In the future you may rely on me to help you keep peace at home, especially after Sunday morning prayers.

Not long after that, when Rastus supposed that the

whiskey question had been settled and everything was moving so smoothly that he began to think that his multitude of sins were well covered, and all that he had to do was to deny his wrongs to Letta and all would be well, one day there was a rap at the door. I answered the call and was confronted by the sheriff, who asked me if Rastus Readen was at home. I told him that he was not. He then asked for his wife and left a paper in her hands summoning Rastus Readen to appear before John Fergison on or about the tenth day of June and settle a whiskey bill that he had contracted at a saloon in the town of Louisiana. When Rastus came home Letta called him to task about the sheriff being there and forever blasting their home and family circle and ruining their good name and high standing among their neighbors. Rastus denied knowing anything whatever about it and affirmed that he never went about saloons or associated with anybody that did, and called upon God to witness the truth of his assertions. In a few days the Sheriff came again and summoned him to attend trial. Rastus denied to the Sheriff that he knew anything about it. However, the Sheriff informed him that he would have to attend trial or judgment would be rendered against him. As Rastus knew all about buying the whiskey and having it charged to him from time to time but not thinking that the saloon keeper would sue him, he went and settled the account. When he came back he told Letta that it was for whiskey that he had stood good for the payment of for Old Jack. Old Jack was an old negro who lived about a mile away, who only got fifty cents a day for his labor when he could get work to do and most of the time he was idle, and when he did work he was obliged to take his pay in pruducts from the farm. He had a wife and ten children to support and was so poor that from the time his children were born they went entirely without clothing until they were

ten or twelve years old, when they went out and began to earn their own clothing.

Well when he put in this excuse, Letta said, "now Rastus I want you to tell me the truth about this whiskey business and if you don't tell me the straight truth about it I am going to town and find out from the officers, and you have been lying so much about whiskey that every lady in the county will soon begin to think that you are an old 'behind the door Methodist class leader, Sunday school teacher and whiskey drinker. Here we have been holding family prayers every Sunday morning to keep the people from finding out what an old hypocrit you are, and now you come to me with the tale that you stood good for whiskey for old Jack, how much did you have to pay? Only twenty-four dollars! now ain't that a nice thing for a man like you, pretending to be a christian and want to be looked up to as a leading citizen of the country in which we live, and buy whiskey from time to time and hide it all over the farm and when anyone happens to find any of it you try to saddle it on the hired hands and when the sheriff comes and sues you for a whiskey bill and makes you pay the costs, and then you have the audacity to tell me it was only twenty-four dollars. You ought to have more sense than to tell such a weak story as that, when old Jack has a whole dozen in his family and nothing to feed them on and never thinks about puting any clothes on them. Now Rastus I am an exceedingly intelligent woman, so much so that my equal has scarcely ever been found and never been surpassed and then you will try to deceive me by telling that you stood good for Jack and I will bet on it that the cost was not less than one hundred dollars, and here I have been wanting a gold watch and chain for several years and can buy one second handed for twenty-five dollars, but you always had a complaint that money wss too scarce to buy gold watches, but I find that it was not too scarce to buy whiskey with and

hide in every hole and corner till you can get a chance to drink without me seeing you; a pretty christian gentleman you are, to be leading in prayer in church and intreating the rising generation to come out from among the devil's hosts and make their calling and election sure, and at the same time buying and drinking whiskey on the sly and going to bed drunk and when sued for the payment of it, try to fool me by telling me you stood good for Jack."

To get the Jack and whiskey tune stopped he promised her he would get the watch as soon as he could spare the money, so after that she kept easy for a while and did not say much on the whiskey subject. But when Sunday came family devotion was continued and they went hand in hand concocting plans in which to borrow money to buy machinery for the reaping of the coming harvest and in all cases of that kind Letta always acted as his advisor, and she always advised to get money without security and by so doing he could beat his creditors by taking the benefit of the bankrupt law, and as they then had a son she tried to impress on his mind that it was his duty to swindle every body he could in order to lay up in store a large sum of money for their son John, telling him that it was his duty as a christian to beat every body out of their money, as the bible says, "He that neglecteth his own house, who hath departed from the faith, is worse than an infidel."

Letta had by some means learned that one of her half brothers had two hundred dollars that he would loan, so she told her christian hearted Rastus about it and advised him to go and see her half brother, George McLoud and borrow it without security, stating that she felt sure that George had perfect confidence in him. She farther stated that she thought he would be doing perfectly right to get the money and never pay it back from the fact that grandmother had given to Mrs. McLoud a fine horse that she should have given to her (Letta.)

So Rastus called on Mr. McLeod and asked him for the loan of the two hundred dollars, and, as Letta expected, he let Rastus have the money and took his note for it without security. Rastus took the money and hastened to inform Letta that he had been successful in getting the money without security, and they rejoiced together. Rastus then bought the machinery he so much desired for the harvesting of his crops. But he soon began to thirst for some of the good old corn whiskey; so hatched an excuse to tell Letta that he could not get harvest hands unless he would furnish them with whiskey. He told her that he had talked with all the laboring men in the country about working for him through harvest, but all had refused to come unless he furnished whiskey for them. Letta bitterly opposed his buying whiskey, but he claimed that the wheat would perish in the field unless he got it. In spite of her protests he went to town and bought two gallons of whiskey. The next morning there were men at the gate waiting for employment, and the first thing to do was for all hands to come in and have a drink and then to the harvest fields. When Letta raised her eyes she saw at once that several glasses of the whiskey had gone down her beloved Rastus' throat. After the hands had gone to the field Letta decided to dope the whiskey, and threw in a lot of red pepper. When the men came in at noon and had washed up, Rastus brought out the whiskey. When the first man took his drink he took on terribly and claimed that he was poisoned. Rastus said he guessed not and took a drink himself. He detected the pepper at once and threw the glass to the floor in a terrible rage and started to find Letta at the same time grabbing a beer bottle, declaring that he would break it over her head. After searching for some time, he found her behind the hen house. He went up to her and raised the bottle over head saying "I have a mind to mash your head you snake in the grass." "What

have I done that you speak like that to me," she replied. "How dare you ask? You know what you have done. You are not so short of memory that you have already forgotten that you put pepper in the whiskey. I will make you remember it if I have to break your head with this bottle. You are the devil's own angel and fit for nothing but his majesty. What did you do it for?" "I put it in it to keep them from having the cholera." "To keep them from having the cholera," said Rastus, "now you are a liar, you old infernal, low life, low forehead, narrow contracted temple, flat nosed squab, as big around as a whiskey barrel and shaped just like one. You are drunk right now. I will learn you to put pepper in whiskey, and then say you did it to keep off cholera when you know there is no cholera in the country. I know why you did it. You are determined to be the boss, but I want you to understand that I am boss here. I only bought the whiskey in order to get the men to work and save our wheat, and now you have ruined everything, as the hands will all leave and we will lose all our grain, you old fool."

Letta listened to him until she became quite nervous and thought she might wield an influence over him by telling him that the spirits told her to put the pepper in the whiskey. "Now you lie again you old hypocrite; shut up blaspheming in that kind of style; pretend to say the spirits told you to put pepper in whiskey. You have talked spirits so much now that all the hired hands on the place are making fun of you in my presence, and I can't defend you, no matter what they say, as I know you are a fool and I can't say a word, otherwise I would whip them, but as it is I can only tuck my head down like a coward, puppy and take all that comes." Finally Letta said to him "shut your foul, drunken fly trap, you know that it is all a lie you have concocted to get whiskey under the pretense that you could not get hands to save the wheat, you can't fool me as I know it is one of your schemes to get

whiskey to drink yourself. Laborers do not want whiskey to drink while working in the hot sun and she finally told him that she would report him to his force of a Methodist institution, that he called a church. It was then after two o'clock and the hands had become disgusted at them, and some of them called out "well Rastus it is time we were going to the field and as you drive the reaper we are waiting on you, never mind about the whiskey we will harvest the wheat all right," so they went on and harvested and put it in shocks, as Rastus had decided to let it stand a few days before staking and as it was Saturday he settled up with all of the hands and all went to town. Next moring being Sunday, family prayers was resumed. Letta lead that morning and while kneeling she prayed for prosperity and a higher price for wheat and success the coming season and that two foreign nations might involve in war, so as to enhance the price of wheat and thanked the Lord for the fine weather he had sent them while saving their wheat and wound up her prayer by asking for a final home in the New Jerusalem. After prayer we all went to breakfast and as soon as breakfast was over Rastus said, "Now blame it all, hurry up and get ready for church." We all rushed around equal to a lot of scared cats in a meat shop. Letta was so animated over the prospects of the wheat crop that she desired to be more elegantly adorned than usual and called on me to help her with her toilet and as she always claimed that she had a more refined taste in dressing than the people in general and even surpassed the fashionable people of Paris.

Her dress was always entirely different from that of others, and I always found it a hard task to get her ready for church. The first thing was to dress her feet with green ribbon for garters. Owing to the fact that her hair was very thin, she thought it necessary to wear a large number of different ornaments on her head. I will try and describe how she always dressed

her head. She wore several kinds of artificial hair all of different color, one being a long switch made of hemp and of a brownish color. Another was a braid made from the combings of her own hair. For adorning the front part of her head she wore a pad made from the cleanings of the comb, which she pinned on and let one end hang down over her low forehead. She would then wind two or three shades of ribbon around her head and neck. She made her hat after her own style. The frame was made of card board and covered some kind of dress goods, and trimmed with two shades of ribbon, usually green and red, and a ploom made of goose, duck and chicken feathers. For jewelery she had a gold locket one side of which had been lost off, so she took a large brass button, which he brightened, and fastened it on with sealing wax. This locket she fastened to a black cord and wore it around her neck. When she was adorned in this outlandish style, we started for church. When we arrived Letta engaged in sing "Oh, Where are the Reapers." On the way home it began to rain and before we arrived we were wet through. The rain continued several weeks, and filled the ground so full of water that several trees in the yard were uprooted. When the rain ceased the wheat that had been left in the shock all over the country was ruined. Then Letta said that the spirits told her that God had sent the rain to ruin the wheat as a judgment on Rastus for buying whiskey for the harvest hands, and she further said that the spirits advised her to have Rastus put all the property in her name so that their creditors could not close in on them for debts. Letta did not know exactly how to talk to him to get him to sign over the property to her, as she knew he would not listen to her spiritualism, but she finally ventured to break the ice, saying: "Rastus, I think as we are heavily involved and our creditors are liable to try to make us pay them, I think that it is your duty to make over the property to me." "Now,

you want to wear the breeches," said Rastus. "Would not I be a miserable fool to give everything to you and let you have entire control? No I am not quite ready to do that, you old monkey-faced tryant. Why, you have hardly enough sense to come in out of the rain, and you have the audacity to ask me to make over my property to you. I would not be able to borrow another dollar if I did that and our creditors would close down on us. You ought to be ashamed to make such a proposition to me, to place me in a position where I would no longer be recognized as a leading gentleman in this section. What a fool you are to ask such a thing of me." "Your creditors don't need their money," said Letta. "Let them do without it, you don't have to pay them."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Now that Lou is in her teens," said Letta to Rastus, "we must draw the lines closer than ever on her for it is more than likely that some young man will want to marry her and we must not allow her to marry for if she should marry we would have to hire a girl to do the work and it would cost us a dollar a week and even then a hired girl would not do half as much work as Lou does and we well let her go to church to prevent people from talking about us, but we must make her go along as we go and by so doing can watch her and if we catch any man talking to her we will nip it in the bud right on the start. As time rolled on they became more and more tyrannical and even objected to my putting a clean dress on when I went to a neighbors

house on an errand, but would force me to go dirty and ragged. From the time I was fourteen years old they acted like they were half crazy, for fear I might get a chance to marry, and forbid me to even speak to a gentlemen or invite any young lady to come to see me and if any of the neighbor girls did happen to come to see me they would not allow me to entertain them and if they happened to come to the kitchen where I was at work, Letta would make it her business to evesdrop us, to see if she could hear us talk about her and as soon as the company was gone she would ask me what we talked about and would even ask me if I had told anything that happened in the family and said that she intended to ask the girl the first chance she got, and if I had she would beat me to death. There was a little negro girl who came to the house a great deal and she even asked her if she ever heard me say anything about them. She also forbid me to correspond with any person, saying that if she ever knew of me writing to anybody it would not be good for me. Soon after I got up from the long spell of sickness, I received a letter from one of my cousins, a Miss Woodson. She wrote a very nice letter to me stating that she had heard of my sickness and expressed her deepest sympathies for me and requesting me to answer her soon as she was anxious to learn if I was improving. The letter was handed to me by the girl that worked for Letta and Rastus while I was sick. I can not find words to express my feelings when she handed me the letter. My heart appeared to come up in my throat and my whole system trembled. The girl looked at me and wanted to know what was the matter with me. I could hardly govern myself sufficiently to answer. I asked her not to tell Aunt Letta that I had received a letter, as she don't let me write to any one. "Your Aunt Letta must be an old devil," said Fanny, "if she don't ~~lett~~ allow you to write to a friend." I was so nervous that I could hardly speak, but I asked her to

read the letter for me, and she did so. I again pleaded with her not to tell Aunt Letta and she promised that she would keep it to herself. I then asked her to answer it for me, so she furnished the material and answered it. I burned my cousins letter and supposed all was a profound secret and as far as we were concerned it was.

Sometime after that I got hold of some fool's cap paper. As I was very anxious to learn to write and after copying from the spelling book, and had got so I could make the letters, I thought I would try to compose a letter. While Letta and Rastus were away from home one day I tried to write, but I did not have time to finish the letter. I was afraid to spare too much time from work, and I knew if Letta found out that I had been trying to write she would make it more than unpleasant for me. As I did not wish to destroy the paper I thought I would hide it and when I found an opportunity I would finish it. So I hid the paper and went about the work. When Letta and Rastus came home, Letta found the paper and read it. She called me and asked if I wrote that. I answered her that I had. She then said, "have I not told you that I did not intend to allow you to write, you wench, you. How dare you disobey me, you wretch. What do you mean by disobeying me? Now I tell you plainly, and you had better remember it too. If I ever know or hear of you attempting to write another letter, I will actually kill you. I tell you now that I positively forbid you of ever attempting to try to learn to write. Go to work right now and let this be the last time I ever know of you trying to write a letter." I went on about the work and she burnt the paper, but she never stopped abusing me about it for at least a month.

I had heard from my earliest recollections that there was a divine Ruler and that by His almighty power I hoped I would be protected. I often wondered why it was, if God was watching over me, that he

allowed me to be so shamefully imposed upon. Many nights I have wept until the pillow was wet with tears, from thinking about the cruel and abusive treatment they had heaped upon me during the day. I knew not how to help myself as I was afraid to tell anybody or ask for help from the fact that they had threatened me so much and made me believe that I had no friends and they harassed me so much that my nervous system became so shattered that I was helpless even of springing a thought of how I might help myself.

One of Lettas deepest thoughts appeared to be on the subject of how to prevent me from getting a chance to marry. She forbid me to accept the company of any young gentleman and at the same time told me not to tell any of them that she did not allow me to have company. One Sunday afternoon there were services at the Baptist church and I was there and after the services were over, Mr. Bruphat stepped up to me and politely asked me if he might have the pleasure of my company home. I did not dare to accept his company and at the same time I hated to mortify his feelings by telling him he could not have my company and I did not dare to tell him why, but as I did not answer him and he saw that my face was as red as fire, I suppose he took it for granted that silence gave consent, so he came home with me. I don't think I would have felt worse if I had been going to hear my death warrant. I knew I was doomed when I reached home, and sure enough when we reached home, Letta was standing in the front door and when we came up to the house without allowing me to invite him in the house, she ordered me to go and fasten up the chicken house. I knew by the look she gave me with her dangerous looking eyes, trouble was on hand. I immediately started for the chicken house and Mr. Bruphet went home.

Lettia followed me and when she got out to where I was she began to abuse me, calling me vile names

and saying she would kill me if I ever brought a beau home with me again. "I don't allow you to have company, and you knew better then to let him come home with you. Now you shall stay home from this on; you shall not have beaus. You have got to stay at home and work; now don't you mention going to church again." She kept it up in that way until twelve o'clock that night; and the first thing the next morning was to repeat the same thing over. She kept it up every day for three months and she never allowed me to go to church any more for twelve months. The first time I did go, there was Sunday school at Nally Chapel and the school was in session. One of the teachers came over to the class that I was in and asked if anyone had a lesson paper they would loan him. I happened to have two so gave him one. I saw Letta cast her vicious eyes at me, and I knew I would hear from her when I got home. When I got home she said that I smiled as I handed the paper to him. "Now you needn't think of such a thing as catching him for a beau; if you should I would nip it in the bud. I will put you in the kitchen and keep you there."

I did not dare to speak to a young man where she could either hear or see me, and if any happened to speak to me, I did not dare reply. Even when there were any kind of social gatherings in the community and if an invitation was given me she would not allow me to attend. She told me that if any person asked me why I did not go I should not tell them that she would not allow me to go, but I should say I considered it a sin to go to social gatherings, and for that reason would not go. Letta's idea was to prevent me from going to any kind of entertainments under the cloak of religion, and by that means she would hinder me from making acquaintances with any of the young gentlemen, and would therefore be able to keep me a slave for her. Oh! how my heart always ached when I saw the other young people in the community passing by

going to the picnics or fishing parties, or whatever it may happen to be. Some of them would call at the gate to invite me to go along with them, but Letta would answer for me, saying, "Lou does not think it right to go to parties, and for that reason she will not go.

As time rolled on and the tyrants, Letta and Rastus continued to exert their dread sway over me, my nerves grew weaker and I became less able to defend myself mentally, from being beaten down by them. There was a Mr. Meyer, who was visiting his relation in the vicinity and by chance made my acquaintance and sought my company on one evening when there was to be a lecture on human nature, delivered at the Presbyterian church.

Mr. Meyers wrote a note to me expressing his desire for my company for the evening. He sent the note by a little boy and when he came he asked Letta where I was and then Letta wanted to know what he wanted of me. He told her that he had a note for me. Letta took the note and read it and before saying a word to me she told the boy to tell Mr. Meyers that I could not go. A few days after that they sent their son John to the Post Office and he returned with a letter addressed to me, and gave it to Letta, Rastus being present they opened it without my consent and read it. After they had read it they put it in the fire and burned it in my presence and forbid me to answer it and at the same time they said they would burn me if I ever told any one about their opening my letters. Then Rastus sat down and wrote to Mr. Meyers forbidding his asking for my company again. "Now that we have got Meyers and Lou broke up" said Letta, "I think if we manage it right we can prevent her from getting married and we will get the work done without having to pay for it and I dont think we will have a great deal of trouble in keeping her for ten years longer and by that time she will be an old maid, and old maids are not likely to get a chance to marry, and

it might be we would never have to hire our work done."

On one occasion there was a wealthy farmer who sought my acquaintance and as he was a widower he did not mention courtship but came to the house as if on a friendly visit to the family and the first chance he got he asked me to marry him and as I was so thoroughly disgusted with Letta and Rastus that I had decided that I could not worse my condition no matter who I married and as I knew Mr. Scrogins was a nice man and was the owner of considerable property and did not owe a dollar and an honest man and upright citizen and for the sake of getting away from Letta and Rastus, I promised him that I would marry him.

Letta had been in the adjoining room and taking in every word that was said and as quick as he had gone Letta came in and began abusing me for having promised that I would marry him and she called me every vile name that she could think of and threatened to kill me. When she saw Rastus coming from the field she went and met him to tell him about me promising Mr. Scrogins that I would marry him. They could not find any fault with him so they hatched up an excuse that one of his cousins committed suicide and they declared that they would murder me rather than see me marry a man related to a suicide.

Mr. Scrogins had three good farms, one in Missouri, one in Arkansas and one in Texas, besides other good property. All the neighbors expressed themselves as being glad that I could marry so well, but Letta and Rastus were not caring for my welfare. The whole object was to hold and keep me enslaved to work for them. Mr. Scrogins returned in a few days and told me that he was going to Arkansas to look after his farm there; as his houses were all occupied and none of them would be vacated before Christmas, we would wait until the first of January to get married.

Letta was eavesdropping and heard all our plans, and as that was October she waited no time to do her dirty work. She began to make use of every scheme that she could plan to break our engagement. So she watched the Post Office, and got my letters and read them without my consent. On one occasion she and Rastus opened my trunk and stole a letter I had received from him and read it. She then went in one of the back rooms and locked the door and wrote a letter to him but I have never learned what she wrote, but I supposed she signed my name to it. She did not mail it at the Reading Post Office where I always had my mail sent but took it to Louisiana and mailed it there. Cousin Addie who went to town with her told me that she saw the letter and that she saw her mail it. Addie did not tell me for a couple of months and then she begged me to promise her that I would not say anything to Letta about it, before she would dare tell me as she said Aunt Letta had threatened to whip her if she told me. By those means Letta managed to break the engagement between us.

As I have before stated, Scrogins was a widower, his wife having died two or three years previous, but had no children. His wife was a cousin of Rastus and both knew him well, and knew there was not a blemish against his character. One day Letta went to Mrs. Howckin's, his mother-in-law, and as Letta and Rastus always kept their infernal, low-lifed schemes a secret, Mrs. Howchin did not know that they were scheming to break up our engagement, and said to Letta, "I am so proud that Mr. Scrogins and Lou are going to be married. Even if he is my son-in-law, I can say that he is one of the most excellent men I ever saw, and I know he will treat Lod as tenderly as a baby. I can't speak too highly of him for he was so good and kind to my daughter, and I feel sure that he will make Lou very happy, and she is such a good girl that I know she will make him a good wife. He is rich too, and I

am sure they will be happy." Letta did not answer her, but when she got home said that Mrs. Howchin was a crazy old fool to be bragging her son-in-law the way she did. Although they could find no blemish against his character, they had the nerve to hatch one of their infernal lies on him to the effect that he had broken his promise with me and that I was going to sue him for breach of promise, which was as untrue as many other hellish lies, that no one else could ever think of, as they both knew that Letta had written to him and broken our engagement all unbeknown to me.

In another instance there was a Methodist protracted meeting going on at Nally Chapel which continued four or five weeks and during this meeting many people came and attended from remote localities. Among those from a distance was a young gentleman by the name of Hosteter, who was well educated and was at that time teaching a Literary school of a high grade in a distant vicinity. He being a Methodist took active part in the meeting, often leading in prayer. He bore the finest kind of a reputation from his neighborhood, and was loved and esteemed by all the good people of that meeting and Rastus and Letta had been eulogizing him for several days, until they learned of his desire to make my acquaintance and called at the house hoping to meet me. Letta immediately put in her objections on the grounds that he was of German descent and the Germans were not fit subjects for any woman to marry. With that excuse she would not let me go in the parlor where he was. They could not find any cause to mistreat him, and as he was a member of the Methodist church, they entertained him in the parlor. They knew he wanted to make my acquaintance and go to church with me that evening. But as he rode a horse, they to prevent us from getting acquainted, made me remain away from his presence until time to start to church and then made me go in the wagon with them and others.

Mr. Hosteter was, after the old adage, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." So in a few days he called again, and it being late in the afternoon he remained over night. They would not allow me a chance to make his acquaintance and that being the second failure, he decided one more effort. The next Sunday morning he came again as there was no services at any of the churches that day and I presume he thought I would not have so much work to do and therefore have a better chance to entertain him. But as soon as he came Letta sent me to the kitchen and Rastus entertained him in the parlor. I thought I would prepare a nice dinner as I knew he would remain for dinner. After getting the dinner ready, Letta came to the kitchen and said to me, "now you go right straight and take those preserves off of the table and the butter too, and that pie. I want you to understand that I don't intend to have Sol Hosteter eat my good grub, and you need not think that you are going to catch him that way. He is German and no German shall talk to you, nor eat my perserves. You shall not come in the dining room while he is at dinner." So she waited until she saw all the delicacies taken off of the table, then she announced that dinner was ready. Mr. Hosteter remained until four o'clock in the evening without seeing me and of course he never came again.

CHAPTER XIV.

James Readen was a splendid financier and was always honest in all his dealings except in his courtships, he usually had as the saying is "two or more strings to his bow" and James was in no hurry to marry as he had seen what a failure his brother Rastus made

in marrying Letta. As Rastus had told him on one occasion that he was in a hurry to marry Letta, since she had told him that she had twenty five hundred dollars, and she was the only girl in the country around there that had that much ready cash, and that she would like to marry some man that would take the money and speculate with it. Notwithstanding he had no love for her, but on the other hand was ashamed to be seen with her in company. But as twenty-five hundred dollars was not picked up every day, by speculation he would marry the money instead of her. James saw that Rastus had made a great mistake and decided to acquaint himself with several girls and marry the one that suited him best. Among the girls that James carried on his flirtations with was Miss Nannie Pied. Nannie became deeply infatuated with him so much so that she made no effort to cancel her sentiments from him. Her father was at that time considered one of the wealthiest men in northeast Missouri. She was a niece of Letta's and was featured like her in many respects. While James' heart was reaching out for wealth he contemplated marrying Nannie, though his tenderest affections were with golden-haired Louis. "Poor little Louis" he said to himself as he sat on the sofa meditating his love affairs. "How can I ask her to be my bride since she has learned of my engagement with Nannie? I have acted the fool in engaging myself to her, but there is no truer proverb than 'the love of money is the root of all evil.' What will it profit me if I marry her and get a few thousand dollars, and find I have got a Letta on my hands. The more I think of it, the more I feel like a fool. I shall put my wits together and plan some scheme to break my promise with her, but she might prosecute me for breach of promise. I would rather lose a few hundred dollars then live all my life with a woman like Letta. I don't see how on earth Rastus can put up with Letta, for I know I could not."

The next day was Sunday. James dressed himself artistically and ordered one of the colored servants to saddle his large bay horse. "Curry him well" said he to the servant, "for I am going to see my intended bride." "Yes sah, I will sah, I wish I was agoin' to see my ever lasting bride to-day" replied the servant. The horse was soon ready and James got on and was soon out of sight. "My master James is a fine looking man when he has got his Sunday tuckens on," said the servant to a boy that was standing by.

When James arrived at Mr. Stack's house he got off the horse and rang the bell. His coming was not unexpected to Louis and she was in the parlor waiting for him. "How beautiful you look today," said James, "It seems to me you grow more lovely every time I see you and your dress is exquisite indeed, and is very becoming to you" The blushes came to her face as she smiled and said, "thank you." James was considerably nonplussed from the fact that he was aware that she was apprised of his making love to Nannie. "Would you like to take a stroll through our flower garden, and see our pretty flowers?" she asked. "Certainly, he said, it will afford me great pleasure, but let us go by the spring, as I am quite thirsty after riding in the warm sunshine." He tendered her his arm as they went down the steps and proceeded along the gravel walk to the spring. It was only about eighty feet from the house and had a stone wall all around it, excepting where the steps were in front of the spring. This spring furnishes very fine water" he said as he drew a silver cup from his pocket. "Yes, she said, it is the unadulterated ale clear as a crystal, such as our father Adam drank." Each of them took a drink and proceeded to the flower garden. As they entered the gate Louis began plucking the roses from the climbing vines, which formed an arch over the gate. "How fragrant your roses are, said James, one might imagine himself in a new world from the balmy breeze we in-

hale." "Yes, indeed" said Louis. "How beautiful the cypress looks today? I could look at them all day and never tire." "The same with me" he replied as they sat down on the settee, "and especially while you are here. It seems to me you add to the beauty of the flowers. You are a rose in my estimation, and without you the garden would lose its greatest charm for me." "Really!" said Louis, I am afraid you flatter me." "Louis, he said with flattering voice, my happiness will never be complete without you my love." She looked up at him and asked, "James have you not spoken the same to Nannie and have you not promised to wed her." "Not if I know myself" he said. "Is it possible I have been wrongly informed? she asked. "Certainly, he said, Nannie will never be as dear to me as you are, and I can't think of marrying her. My joys would be unspeakable if you were only mine. What do you say dear, will you be my bride?" If I do not wrong Nannie" she said. "Not in the least" he said and believe me dear I will never betray your confidence. When you are mine I will never neglect you. I place this ring on your finger, he said, as a token of my love; the ring is round and has no end and my love for you is as endless. I must go as it is getting late." They arose and went to the house. James bid her goodbye and kissed her dainty hand.

It was the custom in those days in the country for the young gentleman to visit their lady-love every other Sunday, he took advantage of that custom to carry on his flirtation and work his scheme to a finish. The next Sunday he went to see Nannie. James had great fear of being prosecuted for breach of promise, so he would not dare to ask her to break the engagement between them. James had his scheme planned and set out to work it. "Well, Nannie is not very smart at best, said he, and I can tell her most anything I want too, as she will believe it. When he called on her the next Sunday he said to her as he entered the

parlor and extended her hand. "My Angel dove, I have come to tell you something that will surprise you, and you may become indignant at first, but I hope not." Nannie looked bewildered. She could not imagine why he spoke thus to her. "Take a seat near me, my precious one," he said and dropped his voice to a low undertone. "Darling, he said, I am going to put your love to a cruel test, you know, dear, that when I was only a lad at school, I fancied myself in love with little Louis Stack, everybody at that time called her little Louis. I promised then that I would some day make her my bride; but I have long since found that it was only a boyish whim. Since I have become a man, and know what true love is, I have set my whole heart on you and to lose you means to blight my life. Louis wants to hold me to my promise, and if I should betray the trust I have plighted, her brothers would kill me if they got a chance. There is but one way in which to save myself and you. First I have a request to make of you and hope you will grant it. I have decided to go to Texas next spring and remain there three or four years during which time Louis will forsake me and perhaps marry some one else. I am going to ask you to be faithful to me and when all is settled between Louis and my self I will return and marry you. Do you promise he asked." "It shall be as you wish" she said. "My life would not be worth living without you, and heaven will never be complete, until you arrive there. It grieves me beyond measure to think of leaving you, although I know it is best for you and me.

James returned home that evening chuckling in his sleeves, as the saying is, over his success in carrying out his treacherous scheme. As time rolled on James continued his flirtations between Nannie and Louis, dividing his visits between them, assuring each one that they held his entire heart. Christmas came and winter was passing swiftly by. James began to

make preperation to get married. The fifth of April was set for the wedding of he and Louis and she had purchased the goods for her wedding gown. Her dress was seal brown silk, with hat and gloves to match and great preparations were being made to make the event a pleasant one. There were more then two hundred guests invited. James had also procured his wedding clothes and his parents were preparing for a grand reception.

On the fourth of April, in the afternoon, James went to see Nannie and told her he had came to say goodbye. He said, "I will start to Texas tonight, as my life is in danger, for Louis will have her brothers murder me if I stay, unless I marry her, and that would blight my life forever." Nannie heaved a sigh and tears ran down her cheeks. "Don't weep dear, he said, it hurts me to see you grieve." So she smothered her face in her handkerchief and sobbed bitterly. James stepped nearer and said. "I will take you to Tevas with me if you wish to go." "I would go, she said but I am not prepared, besides papa and mamma are away from home. "Oh, that doesn't matter" he replied, "you need not make any preparations. There is no time to be wasted. We must hast and be off and as to your parents, they will have to pass my father's house and I will see them and tell them all about it." Nannie's heart was overwhelmed with delight at his proposal, and hurriedly packed a large valise. She was soon ready and the servant had her fathers best riding nag saddled for her. "You had better remain" said Mrs. Brady to James, "and you and Nannie come to Sally's wedding next Sunday." "I would gladly do so, said James, but my life depends on getting away as soon as possible." Sally was Nannie's sister who was several younger then she. Sally was expected to be married the next Sunday.

James and Nannie mounted their horses and were soon out of sight. We will go to brother Rastus' he

said, and get married at his house tonight, at about seven o'clock, and Rastus will take us to Louisiana and there we will get on the train. By this time tomorrow we will be in Sherman, Texas."

It was about eight miles from Nannie Pied's home to where Rastus and Letta lived. James amused himself and her all along the road, talking to her about their future happiness, while Nannie listened with overwhelming bliss. They journeyed along together until they were within one hundred yards of his father's house, and there the road forked which lead to Rastus' house. "Now, Nannie said James, "it is only one-half mile from here to Rastus' house, and as we have no time to spare I think it would be better for you to go on alone, while I go up home and put on my new suit and I will be there in about an hour. So when they reached the place where the road forked he turned from her and went up to his father's house all the time keeping a close watchout for Nannie's parents. Nannie had scarcely reached Rastus' house when her parents came by and the horse which she rode was yet standing by the gate. They immediately recognized the horse, and decided they had better stop and make inquiry as to why the horse was standing there. Nannie went down to the gate and related the circumstances to them, and told them to stop at James' fathers as James would wish to talk with them. So when they reached the old Readem plantation they stopped at the gate, where James met them and asked permission to marry their daughter Nannie. They gave him their consent, and after expressing their best wishes to them they bade him goodbye and drove on.

Nannie kept a close look out for James and waited untiringly for him and when three hours had passed and James had not come, Nannie walked down to the gate hoping to get a glimpse of him coming. Finally her brother and his chum arrived and later James father and son-in-law came, but no James was in sight.

“It is nearly nine o’clock,” said Nannie, “and I don’t see him yet, something has certainly happened to him” she said, and heaved a heavy sigh. “Are you sure he has not deceived you,” said her brother. “No, I will never believe that of him,” she replied, “but I fear he has met with an accident. Hark! I hear his voice at the gate.” They ran to the door and they heard James yelling, “help, help, murder, murder, save me, save me.” James drew his knife and stabbed at his father several times, but taking care not to touch him. Then James jumped over the fence into the orchard and ran away. The other men went after him as they thought that he was insane. Finally they got him and succeeded in getting him back to the house and he soon became calm and asked to see Nannie. When Nannie came in Jack said, “Are you angry with me?” “No, I am not angry” she replied, “but why did you not come as you promised?” He said, “I thought I saw John and Will Stack coming here and I was afraid to come, but I must leave on the morning train. I know when Stack’s folks learn of this they will seek to kill me, but if I go I will return and marry you, that is if you promise to wait for me. If I don’t come back I will send for you. Will you come when I write for you?” “Yes,” said Nannie “I will come to you at any time.” At midnight they all retired except James and Rastus. They remained in the parlor the balance of the night and at five o’clock that morning James’ father returned and persuaded him to go home.

At five o’clock in the afternoon James dressed in his wedding suit and got in his buggy and went and married Louis Stack. “Nannie will never prosecute me” he said to himself, “I can lead her to the end of the world.” A few days later he wrote to her, requesting her to elope with him. Nannie was so blinded in him that she could not see any wrong in him, no matter what he did or said and when she received the letter she was so overjoyed, she could not hide her emotion.

She did her work so hurriedly, all the family knew she was excited, but she kept the secret to herself. A few days later she said to her mother, I would like to go on a visit to aunt Letta's." Her mother was unaware of the fact that she was going to meet James and so allowed her to go. When Nannie got to Letta's she told her about James wanting her to elope with him. Letta sanctioned the plot and opened the parlor for them. When James came he talk to Nannie concerning the elopement but he never set any time to start. Soon thereafter Nannie found a new suiter, and James laughed over his success.

CHAPTER XV.

"Uncle Laphatt I need some money. Have you as much as five hundred dollars that you could loan me?" asked Rastus of his uncle Laphatt Readen. "I have that much money in the bank," he replied and will let you have the use of it for six months at ten per cent interest, but unless you can pay it back to me at the end of that time I shall not let you have it." "I only want it about three months," said Rastus, "When I sell my calves this fall I will pay you." Laphatt had perfect confidence in his nephew so let him have the money. Rastus was happy once more. He spent a great deal of his time hunting, fishing and visiting his relatives. The hired hands were working at their leisure and sleeping under the shade trees. and at other times playing mumbie peg, or such games as they felt most inclined.

Three months had passed and Rastus said nothing about paying the note. The calves were sold and the money spent. Six months rolled around and Laphatt

called on Rastus and presented the note for payment. "I have no money now" said Rastus. "Well Rastus I need the money, but I do not want to press you, and if you will pay me soon I will wait." "I can pay you when I sell my hogs in about six weeks." Rastus sold his hogs, put the money in his pockets and went duck hunting and on pleasure exploits, enjoying himself immensely. Not a word did he say to his uncle about paying the note. Finally his uncle called on him again and demanded the payment of the note. "I haven't got any money," said Rastus. "I am tired hearing the same old song every time I come. The note is passed due and you must pay it, or I shall sue you. This is the last time I intend to notify you without an officer." When Laphatt was gone, Rastus informed Letta of him wanting his money. "Don't you pay it" she answered. "The spirits told me to tell you that Laphatt did not need his money and you commit a sin to pay him and disobey the spirits." "Now you have began that infernal spirit lie again. I won't listen to such nonsense as that," said Rastus. "I would not either" said their little Johnny, who was a small boy at that time. "I will whip you, you little scamp." said Letta. "No you won't whip him" said Rastus. "He is right, child as he is, he has got more sense then to believe such nonsense as you talk about." "Mamma talks like a fool, don't she papa," said Johnny, "I will whip you," she yelled out at Johnny. "If you whip him I shall whip you," Rastus said. Letta grabbed a whip and made for Johnny and Rastus grabbed the ironing board and made for her, at the same time yelling out, "stop or I will split this board over your head." She struck Johnny once with the whip and then ran in the sitting room and grabbed the bible and read, 'children obey your parents.' "Rastus she said, don't you see the wrong you are doing in teaching that child to disrespect me?" "I don't want him to respect you as long as you are not worthy of

his respect. Just think of it, a woman trying to influence her husband by telling him that spirits say he should not pay his honest debts. A nice doctrine to teach a child. You shall not preach such nonsense to him, it must be stoped" said Rastus.

The next morning being Sunday she requested Rastus to hold family prayer upon which he demurred on the grounds that whipping boys and splitting boards over heads, did not harmonize with family prayers." She then ran out in the back yard and screamed to the top of her voice, saying, "I knew it would come to this! I knew it would come to this!" Rastus ran out in the yard and as he came near her he said, "What do you mean Letta?" She did not answer him but ran into the house and threw herself down on the floor, screaming and yelling at the top of her voice, at the same time throwing her hands about in every direction, and after putting in several minutes with other performances she got upon her knees, and grabbed at her hair with the pretence of trying to pull it out. All this time she continued to yell, "I am crazy! I am crazy! I told you, you would run me crazy. How are you going to get along with a crazy wife? If I stay crazy you will lose all our property." Up to this time Rastus had been looking on in amazement. "I'll cure you," said Rastus and he ran and got a bucket of water and threw it on her, upon which she jumped up saying, "you infamous scoundel, you want to drowned me, because I am crazy. You have got an idea into you head to worry me to death, so you can get a young wife. I can read you if I am crazy. None but the most intelligent people ever go crazy. I have told you all the time that a low and narrow forehead like mine was indicative of a strong intellect. Fools like you are never crazy." She then sat down and resting her face on her hands, said, "Now Rastus if you want me to come to my senses, so as to save our property you must reason with me, for the bible says,

“come let us reason together.” I reason with spirits and you must reason with me, and as the spirits guide me, so you must be guided by me. When I tell you to hold family prayer you must do so, and when the spirits say you should not pay a note you should obey them.” “I am tired of so much nonsense” said Rastus: “There it is again,” said Letta, “didn’t I just tell you, you should not resist the spirits. Mark what I say we will be broken up if you don’t listen to me and do as the spirits say.” Rastus could not stand that any longer so he grabbed his hat and left the house. She kept on scolding him until he was out of hearing then she turned to me and said “you must remember it will be harder to get along with me while I am crazy; but you must not tell anybody about it, for I don’t want any of the neighbors to know I am crazy. If you should tell it they would not believe it and besides they would tell me and I’d make you wish you had not told.

Rastus spent the afternoon at his father’s house and met his brother James there and made arrangements with him for money to pay his uncle Laphatt. When Letta learned that Rastus had paid his uncle she was very displeased but Rastus told her that his folks advised him to pay the note then she was very angry with all of them for having given Rastus such advice. One morning when she arose she stated that she had a great vision in her dream, and claimed that the Lord was keeping her posted concerning all her enemies. It was quite awhile before she would interpret her dream. She dreamed of seeing a basket and in the basket there were four hawks and one little innocent dove. Letta said, “the little dove represents myself; the four hawks represent my four enemies, Rastus, Dr. C. B. Role, Laphatt and John Readen. The basket represents their combination against me. Now, she said that goes to prove that the Lord is on my side. When they plot against me and tell Rastus

not to listen to me, when I tell him what the spirits say, but advise him to pay people the money he owes them instead of saving it for Johnny and myself. The Lord visits me in my dreams and keeps me posted." Letta often went out on the farm and remained for hours and when she returned she would say she had been kneeling before the Lord receiving revelations from on high. The Lord advised her to do all she could to prevent Rastus from paying his debts. She kept this foolishness up until the neighbors began to hear of it and Rastus' creditors began to lose confidence in him, for his enduring such nonsense as that, and his creditors commenced pressing him for the money they had loaned him.

As I previously stated, Rastus borrowed two hundred dollars from Mr. McLoud, who called upon Rastus to get the money, but Rastus sang the old tune, "I haven't any money, but I'll have it soon." "Now Rastus," said McLoud, "I don't want to press you for the money and I will give you more time but I must have my money this fall, for I need it as I want to build a barn." Rastus said that he would have the money as soon as he sold the wheat. When fall came Rastus sold his wheat and put the money down in his pocket and never said a word about settling with Mr. McLoud. McLoud called again but Rastus begged for more time, telling him that his wheat was so belighted that he could not sell it for money enough to pay expenses for harvesting it. "Now look here Rastus," McLoud said, "I need my money and must have it, and I don't want to sue you and make you pay the costs, for I am willing to do what is right by you and give you as little trouble as possible. You can sell me some thing from the farm that I can turn into money. I will be willing to take some horses or cattle or hay, in fact any thing that you have. I will take it rather than cause you any trouble." Rastus refused on the grounds that he had nothing that he could spare from the farm.

Mr. McLour borrowed the money so that he could build his barn and gave Rastus more time in which he could pay the money. Letta learned that McLoud wanted his money and said to Rastus, "Now Rastus don't you pay that money, but take the benefit of the bankrupt law and beat him out of it. Rastus did not like the idea of the bankrupt law from the fact if he did he could not borrow any more money. Then she again requested him to deed the property to her. "Now you will give me that spirit song again I suppose." said Rastus. "Wouldent I be a pretty fool to do such a thing as that." "Rastus, if you don't either take the benefit of the bankrupt law or deed the property over to me so that I can beat them, you are no christian. The law allows a man to keep fifteen hundred dollars worth of personal property and as much land as we have got, an if you will listen to me and do as I say, we can beat every body out of all we owe them, fix the property in my name and then let our creditors crack their whips, and do their worst, they cant help themselves. You know the preachers take the benefit of the bankrupt law in order to protect their families. Just look how Morgan Motherhead put everything he had in his wifes name." "Yes and got kicked out of the house by her," said Rastus, "I suppose you want a chance to do the same to me, never will I give you a chance to treat me that way you monkey headed squab you, how can I deed it to you when there is a mortgage on the place." "Well," said Letta, "Deed it over to some trustworthy friend that will deed it back to me."

Rastus was equally as anxious to beat his creditors as Letta, but he did not want to get into a predicament so that he would not be able to borrow any more money. Finally, to fool Letta, Rastus made the property over to his father and mother and they made a deed to the same and gave it to Letta. Letta thought she had managed things well, and at once attempted to take charge. She dictated to Rastus how he should man-

age the farm and stock. Rastus often became so vexed at her that he threatened to kick her off the farm, but she then reminded him that the farm was hers. On one occasion there was a colt among the stock which happened to be one of the increase of the mare that she owned when she and Rastus were married; and she consequently claimed the right to name it, and from the time it was two days old until it died two years after, they quarreled about its name. Rastus called it Kate and Letta called it Nellie. When Rastus spoke of Kate a quarrel would always follow, which would always extend into the middle of the night. These quarrels disturbed every body on the place so much that some of the hired men called on Rastus for a settlement, saying they could not stand it to work hard in the field all day and be kept awake all night by their quarrels. Not only did they quarrel between themselves about the colt's name, but drew Johney and myself into it. If we called it Kate, Letta would abuse us, and if we called it Nellie, we imediately heard from Rastus. This was kept up even for some time after the colt was dead.

One day Letta thought she would get the deed out from among some other papers to see what her farm was valued at, and when she looked it over she found that there was no name signed to it. This so enraged her that she threw herself on the floor, screamed and tore her hair, crying "Oh, my money! my money! It is all gone! What will become of me? We will have to pay our debts. and then we'll have no money! Oh, Lord, show me some way to save our property.

Rastus finally decided to change the deeds another way to appease her, so he suggested to her that they make the property over to his brother James. Letta quickly consented to the scheme with the understanding that James would deed it back to her. James had been perfectly quiet concerning the money they owed him and for that reason they thought he would not

press them for it. Rastus and Letta called on James and acquainted him with the fact that they were deeply involved and desired to transfer their land to him and have him transfer it back to Letta. James sanctioned the plan, and encouraged them saying it was the very thing for them to do. They deeded their farm to James Readen and as soon as they made the deed and gave it to James he put it on record and then told Letta he would deed it back to her when Rastus paid him the money he owed. When Letta heard this she was completely beaten. She railed at him saying, "you villian, I will have you arrested and send you to the state prison, if you don't make that deed over to me." James only laughed at her and said, "pay me my money and I will give you the deed."

Mr. McLoud again asked Rastus for the two-hundred dollars he owed him, but Rastus again cried no money and talked of whipping him for so often asking him to pay the note. Finally Mr. McLoud entered suit against him. Rastus hired a lawyer to defend him and had the trial put off from one court to another as long as the law would allow. Mr. McLoud finally got judgement for the note and cost of trial, but Rastus continued to make threats against him and Mr. McLoud was informed of Rastus threatening to whip him.

One day McLoud chanced to meet Letta and said to her, "Look here Letta, I hear that your little Methodist talks of giving me a whipping." Letta pretended not to hear him. Mr. McLoud went near her and taking her by the sleeve said, "Listen to me. I hear that Rastus intends to whip me. Now, you tell your little Methodist classleader that any time he wants to whip me to come down and I will accomodate him. Tell him for me that I am ready for the whipping at any time. He will have to eat more potatoes and pork and grow some more before he will be able to whip me." When Letta went home she related the circum-

stances to Rastus and insisted on him to have Mr. McLoud arrested for assault and battery. This she succeeded in getting him to do and the court find him one dollar and cost, which amounted to fifty dollars. Letta rejoiced in her spirit dreams. Rastus went on borrowing money from everybody he could, till every horse and in fact all of the stock were mortgaged.

On one occasion when one of his creditors, who held a mortgage on some of the horses called on Rastus and asked him for the payment of the mortgage, Letta planned to have the mortgaged horse taken out in the woods and hidden. She suggested the idea to Rastus, but he tried to convince her that it would not do, as the horses were mortgaged and he was bound to deliver them to the sheriff if his creditors should close the mortgage. Letta would not listen to him, but continued to quarrel with him about being a poor manager.

James finally told Rastus if he could pay him the money he owed him, he would make a deed to the farm in Letta's name. Rastus could not pay him, and Letta began threatening him again and finally told him that she intended to have him sent to the penitentiary. "Well Letta, said James, I will make the deed over to you tomorrow." He borrowed a thousand dollars and mortgaged the farm for the same, deeding it to her, subject to the mortgage. Letta, not noticing that it was subject to the mortgage, took the deed and placed it on record. James payed himself with part of the money he borrowed and gave the balance to Rastus so he could pay the mortgage off of the horses. Letta was in the dark concerning the borrowed money, or the mortgage on the land. She thought she had won a great victory over James by threatening to have him sent to the penitentiary. Rastus knew all about it but carefully concealed it from her. He knew she was a stupid woman and not likely to find out that there was mortgage on the land until it became due.

Family prayer again went on regular on Sunday. "Now Rastus," said Letta, "this farm belongs to me, and it is my duty as a christian to rule my own household, and that means you and all parties on the farm. You and all hands on the farm shall come and go at my bidding." This was a stunner for Rastus, but he was afraid to tell her what kind of a predicament he was in. The way Letta behaved herself from then on was terrible. For instance, she tried to force everybody on the place to eat rotten meats which had been put in brine for the purpose of making pickle pork. She would not allow any meat cooked except that pork from the brine. She and Rastus quarrelled day and night about the meat. His orders were that the meat should not be cooked and her orders were that it should. When he started to the field in the morning his last orders to me were, "Don't you cook any of that meat for dinner." As soon as he was out of sight Letta would say. "You shall cook some of that pickle pork for dinner." As I knew it did not make any difference which I disobeyed for I would be abused any way, and as I was not fond of rotten meat, I choose to disobey Letta. When she saw I would not cook the meat, she notwithstanding her laziness, would get a chunk of the meat and put in a kettle and place it on the stove, and then say to me, "now that is the only meat that shall be cooked. When dinner was called and all hands were at the table, Rastus would then say to me, "didn't I tell you not to cook any more of this rotten meat?" I told him that Letta cooked it. Then the quarrel began and lasted until he started to the field. When she saw she could not get Rastus nor the hired hands to eat it, she said she intended to force Addie and me to eat it, but I decided to do what I did when they both tried to force me to drink the milk after a dog had drank of it. As none of us would eat any of the meat she tried to eat all of it her self, so she cooked and ate freely of it every day. The flavor

became so offensive I decided I would destroy a small portion of it at a time as opportunity afforded me. I took some of it at night and carried it across the field and threw it in a ditch. After I had repeated this several times, one of their dogs went across the field and found some of it, and brought it back. Letta happened to be in the back yard when the dog came lugging it in his mouth. Letta suspected me of being the one that had threw the meat away, and accused me of it. I acknowledged the charge, and to say that she abused me is putting it mildly. I never heard viler language proceed from the lips of any human being then she spoke to me. She ended her discourse by saying that rotten meat was good enough for me or anybody else to eat and Rastus would be glad to get as good meat as that to eat some day, as he was already a pauper who was not worth the shirt that was on his back, and dependent on her for shelter.

After the pork was used up I thought peace would be restored but I found that to hope for peace was to hope in vain. Rastus went fishing and brought home about two hundred pounds of buffalo fish, and it being warm weather it was soon spoiled. Letta salted it and tried the game on us that she had with the pork but none of us would eat the rotten fish, but nevertheless Letta would cook it. I never shall forget on one occasion when she had a large dish full of this fish cooked for dinner, one of her favorite nephews happened to call just as dinner was ready and Letta insisted on him taking dinner with her. He excepted the invitation and notwithstanding the scent from the fish was so sickening that I could hardly stay in the house. Letta passed the fish to him, and said, "John, will you have some fish they are spoiled, but they don't taste bad." "No, thank you," said John. He could not help showing by the expression on his face that he was disgusted with her for eating spoiled fish, and he has said since that he never could respect her as h

would like since he saw her eat spoilt fish. He could not understand what could possess anybody to eat such meat in a civilized world and in a land where there was plenty of everything that was good. If there happened to be any other kind of food on the place that was spoiled she would try to compel us to eat it. I had gathered some cherries and made about a quart of preserves, and one morning during the time wheat was being harvested, I placed a glassful of the preserves on the table for breakfast. When Letta discovered them on the table she ordered me to take them off, saying she could not afford to feed harvest hands on cherry preserves. I took them off of the table and as I had only prepared them for the present use I had not preserved them sufficiently to keep in warm weather, consequently they soon soured. When Letta saw they were spoiled she then wanted us to eat them. There were many other instances in which she tried to make us eat unwholesome food, but they are too numerous to mention.

CHAPTER XVI.

As time rolled on Letta made herself obnoxious both at home and in the vicinity in which we lived. She actually went to such an extreme that she would not allow the family to eat Irish potatoes, or even sweet potatoes, but confined us to tomatoes, green apples, onions, corn bread and butter milk. She said we must live cheap, hired hands and all, for the spirits had told her that we were all committing the unpardonable sin in eating such things as she could put on the market for money. Besides she said the spirits had told her that all of us needed to take a dose of

calomel, and as she said tomatoes contained a large portion of calomel, so we must eat tomatoes in order to set our livers in action; eat green apples to work the tomatoes off, and eat onions to work the green apples off; drink butter milk to work off the onions, and the corn bread would give us bone and muscle, enabling us to do lots of work.

It was in the warm month of July when she made this new command, and in my opinion if there ever is a time when the men who work on the farm require something nourishing to eat, it is when he is working in the field during the warm months of July and August. Letta demanded that the bill of fare should be carefully prepared, and the orders of the spirits should be strictly complied with. She would sit in the dining room or somewhere near and watch to be sure there were was nothing added to the bill of fare. When meals were called and all were at the table, Rastus would complain of the diet and ordered me to cook potatoes, but I told him that Letta had positively forbidden my preparing any thing excepting what the spirits had directed. If I attempted to prepare any thing more she would take it from the stove and forbid my cooking it. He then turned to her and told her he must have something more nourishing to eat as neither he nor the hired hands could work in the field and subsist on what they were having. "Now look here Rastus" said Letta, "my guiding spirit is hygienic and know better what is best for you then you do. You have no right to rebel against the spirits but eat such as they prescribe."

At this statement Rastus and all the hired hands became indignant and Rastus told her that she was led by the devil. "You're the devils own angel," said he, "trying to diet us on tomatoes, green apples and onions and then have the audacity to tell us the spirits prescribed it for us. I am a fool for putting up with such a woman. Why it is absurd and I know all the hired

hands will agree that it is a lie of your own about spirit prescribing for our health." Turning to one of the hired men, Joe, he asked him what he thought of a woman claiming that spirits advise apples and tomatoes as a diet for their health. Joe hesitated to answer at first but when Rastus asked the second time for his opinion he said, "Well Rastus I don't like to interfere with you and your wife's difficulties but I would be willing to risk a more substantial diet. It must be a warm spirit that told her that kind of diet was what all of us needed and the spirit that she has been talking to must have had a peep at her and thought she was wormy, and decided to try an experiment on all of us but I don't take any more of the prescription the spirits prescribe for I am sick of eating green apple pie and drinking sour butter milk.

After the confusion was over they all started to the field again and Rastus left strict orders for a good dinner, and especially ordered potatoes for dinner. When the time came to begin dinner I got the hoe and proceeded to the garden. Letta soon missed me and as she supposed I had gone to the garden for potatoes she came around the corner of the house and yelled out, "What are you doing there?" I told her that I was digging potatoes. "Stop right this minute, you wretch" she said "didn't I forbid you cooking anything except tomatoes? How dare you go in my garden and dig my potatoes without my consent! Now I want you to understand that this is my farm and I am determined to be the boss of it. My hired hands may eat what I have set before them, or starve. They may be glad to get green apples and tomatoes to eat before they die. March yourself right in the kitchen now and slice some tomatoes and cook some corn bread and don't you let me catch you getting potatoes again." I went to the kitchen and did as she bid me and when dinner was called they all sat down to the table and after Rastus looked around and saw the same old bill

of fare he asked me where the potatoes were that he had ordered cook and after I told him that Letta would not let me cook them he replied, "Well who is boss?" Aunt Letta says she is I replied. "Letta, said he, why did you not let her cook the potatoes?" "You already know why" said Letta, "go ahead and eat such as is set before you and be thankful for it. The spirits are liable to cut your rations down less than they have." Rastus took the tomatoes and threw plate and all out of doors. Letta never yielded in the least, and there was no change in the bill of fare, as long as tomatoes and green apples lasted during the season.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Dora Howchin was an estimable young lady, and was a third cousin to Rastus by marriage, and as the Readen family always kept a pedigree of their generations, they claimed their lineage to the fourth and fifth descendants, and Dora often visited us as a relative since she married in the family. One afternoon she brought her baby, which was at that time six months old. While she was passing about the rooms in the house she happened to discover a large safety pin lying on the dresser, picking it up she exclaimed, "Oh, Lou I wish you would give this pin to me in exchange for a small one I have. I need it to fasten the baby's cape on." I told her she would have to ask aunt Letta as it was not mine. So she asked Letta to trade with her. Letta made no objections, but told her to take the pin and which she did. Safety pins were only worth five cents per dozen, but notwithstanding they were so cheap and Letta had made the trade herself, as soon as Dora left she abused me about

the pin, saying she believed I had put Dora up to banter her for a trade. I do not exaggerate when I say she preached every day for two months about that safety pin. When I asked her why she traded with Dora if she did not want to make the trade. "Now you knew that I would not refuse her the pin as she would talk about it if I did. She would tell all How-chin family about my refnsing so small a thing as a safety pin. Now wouldn't that be a pretty story to get out on me?" She kept up the preaching until finally I told her that the next time I would see Dora I would tell her to bring the pin back and I would also tell her that we had quarelled every day since she was here about it. "If you dare to tell her" said Letta "I will cut your throat. I would murder you if you should say one word to her about it. It is done now and can't be undone. I would rather lose it than have her know I am angry about it. Let this be a warning to you and never put anyone up to banter me for a trade again." I told her I had not put her up to do anything of the kind. She said she would not believe me, but I never heard her say any more about it. I suppose she was afraid I would tell Dora, which I did after I was married.

Letta and Rastus were both very shy with their meanness, and through their own wretchedness they came very near losing their son, Johnny. When Johnny was about four and ahalf years old he formed a habit of striking me, sometimes with a stick and other times with his hand. He often times hurt me as he frequently struck me on the head, arms and hands. Letta and Rastus both upheld him in striking me and Letta often told him to spit in my face. By their encouraging him and teaching him to be naughty, He continued this conduct until he was about seven years old. One day I was washing and I had an iron boiler on the fire. I made strong soap suds and put it in the boiler to heat and when it was boiling hot I attempted

to add some of the hot suds to my washing. Just as I lifted a half gallon cup full of the hot suds, Johnny ran up in front of me and struck me in the stomach with both his fists. As I did not see him before he struck, I had no chance to escape the blow and when he struck me it unbalanced me and caused the hot suds to spill on him. He caught the whole of the half gallon of boiling suds on the back of his head and shoulders. The poor child suffered intense agony from the scald and came very near dying. If the little fellow had died it would have been the fault of his parents. When they look upon the scars on Johnny's body to this day they see marks caused by their own wickedness. I don't believe they had ever had any remorse of conscience on account of it, but it learned the child a lesson, as the little fellow never struck me any more.

Letta did not only teach Johnny to mistreat me but she taught him to fight other children and especially if it happened to be a child of some one she was prejudiced against. For instance she did not like Dr. Role who was a brother-in-law to Rastus. Knowing Letta's weak calibre and avaricious disposition the Doctor would not have anything to do with her. Dr. Role had a little boy two years younger than Johnny and as they lived near each other often played together. Letta taught Johnny to fight with the Doctor's child, often telling him to knock him down and beat the life out of him. The two little boys never spent the day together without fighting.

On one occasion the Doctor brought his little boy Willie, over to stay with Johnny while he went to town. There was no one at home excepting Johnny and myself. Little Willie had not been there very long before Johnny began to fight him. I parted them several times, but as I had my domestic duties to attend to, I could not be with them all the time, but as soon as I was out of sight, they would begin to fight.

As Johnny was two years older than Willie, he was much the stronger and could have killed Willie. I heard Willie crying and so I ran in and found Johnny with a hatchet in his hand, threatening to split Willie's head. As Johnny's mother had often told him to beat Willie to death, it is likely that Johnny had decided to please his mother by putting an end to Willie. I took the hatchet from Johnny and told him he should not treat Willie so mean. When Letta arrived home I told her that Johnny drew the hatchet over Willie and threatened to split his head open. Letta only laughed and said she did not care. She was the most cruel hearted woman I ever saw, notwithstanding she professed to be one of God's chosen vessels in which to carry on his holy work. She always rejoiced over the downfall of any person or their child that she did not happen to like. For instance this same little Willie when he was about seven years old took the gun from the house and attempted to shoot a chicken as he had heard his mother say she wanted one for dinner and he had seen his father shoot them. He thought he would show his parents that he could shoot chickens too. He got the gun without the knowledge of his parents and by some means the gun accidentally fired and shot Willie. The shot taking effect on his arm and hand. It was a severe wound and he came very near losing his hand. When Letta heard of the accident she acted as if she was glad the child was hurt. She never spoke a word of sympathy in favor of the poor unfortunate child but she abused and censured him for having such confidence in himself. Letta used a great deal of vile language toward the little fellow and called him many names, saying it would be no pity for him if he died from the effects of the wound. I think she was in hopes the child would die, but to her disappointment little Willie lived over it without losing his hand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Professor Hornbec was a musician and by this profession he maintained his entire support. He was highly accomplished in both instrumental and vocal music, and as there was a large number of young people living in what is known as the Grassy creek vicinity, the Professor decided to try his luck in getting up a vocal class. One evening when prayer was held at the Chapel he was present and when services were over he asked the audience to remain a time and after explaining to them his object he said he knew of no better opening on earth for a singing school than there and that he was sure he never had faced a more intellectual audience than there. He said, "I am here to night for the purpose of trying to organize a vocal class. I teach the notes and after any person has thoroughly learned to read the letters on the staff, and the key in which a piece of music is written they find no difficulty in advancing with their musical studies. Now, said he, I would like to know how many there are here to night that would like to learn to sing. As many as would like to have a school taught here should rise." He took a paper and pencil and went around and took down the names of all who wished to subscribe to the school. He got a good number of names on the list, and among others Rastus signed his name and mine. Before the Professor dismissed the audience he taught one lesson on the black board. I readily understood his explanations and was delighted with the thought of the chance to learn to read music. When we got home I told Letta about Professor Hornbec having organized a singing school, and that Rastus

had signed our names. She yelled out in a loud tone, "Now I will see that you don't go one step to the singing school to fool your time away. Trying to learn to sing the round notes. I know for I studied them three years and never learned one note from another; they all look alike." I told her that the letters on the scale were not read by their shape but by the position they held on the staff and that I knew I could learn it. "You wretch," she said, "that is as much as to say you have got more sense than I have. Don't you repeat that again. I know you could not learn to read the round notes, for I could not, and I know when I can't learn them nobody else can. Round notes can't be learned. They are for instrumental and never was intended to be sung." I told her that the Professor had sang them that night, but she said that was a lie. "He is a scoundrel," she said, "he made believe he was singing them to fool you out of your money. He plainly saw in your fool faces what a set of ignoramuses he had in his power. The thief had the audacity to get up there and read the ignorance he saw in a set of fools and called it vocal music. If he had called it a system of teaching you how to sing money out of a school of fool's pockets instead of a system of teaching vocal round notes he would have called it by the right name.

I had learned to read the letters on the scale that night and when I told her she yelled out, "Who ever heard of notes being called letters. Now that shows that you were fooled." I would soon learn the keys I said to her. "Who ever heard of music having keys to it? That could not be for what use would keys be to music? Keys are to lock and unlock doors and penitentiaries, but how could you lock and unlock music? He shall never get a dollar from this house for talking such nonsense as that." Finally I told her that I would pay my own tuition if she would let me go. "No, she said, you must stay at home and work. That infernal

rascal ought to be locked up in the penitentiary with keys. And he even took the liberty to tell that crowd that they were an intelligent set of people. If there had been a gentleman in the crowd that teacher would have been taken out of the house. You shall not spend one cent of your money for music lessons. I know what you want to go to singing school for. You think you might catch a beau and maybe get married. Don't you ever hint about going to singing school to fool your time away trying to learn a thing that can't be learned. That is a great scheme the young people have to try to get married by going to singing school. I warn you now that you had better not tell anyone that it is my fault that you don't go, but you must tell them that there is no sense in round notes, and you don't want to fool your time away with such nonsense."

After Professor Hornbec had taught several lessons I saw some of his scholars and they asked me why I did not come to singing school. I told them that Aunt Letta would not let me come. They explained to me how easy it was to learn music. I told Letta that Ida Smith and others had told me that music was not hard to learn, and that I wished she would let me go. When I said this to her she grabbed an iron rod, more than three feet long and drew it over me, saying, "I will kill you if you repeat that again. I'll break your head with this iron rod if you ever mention such a thing as singing school again." Before the singing school was out the young people learned that Letta would not let me attend them, so they agreed to tell the Professor that if he did not make Rastus pay our tuition, none of them would pay theirs. They did it because Letta treated me as she did. So the Professor came to see Rastus and presented the tuition account to him for payment and to my surprise he paid it without having to be sued, for he always had to be sued for a debt. When Letta learned that the Professor had made Rastus pay his and my tuition she

was so angry she called him every vile name imaginable, but Rastus treated him very courteously, and invited him to take dinner with us and go duck hunting with him that afternoon. Professor Hornbec accepted the invitation and returned the compliment by inviting Rastus to attend the concert in the evening. Rastus was very fond of music and as the Professor generally carried a violin with him, Rastus insisted on the Professor returning with him after the concert, and remaining all night, and give him some violin music.

When dinner was announced Rastus and the Professor was still at the gate. Letta was so angry because Rastus paid the account without being sued, that when Professor Hornbec came in with Rastus, that she would not give Rastus an opportunity to introduce them, and treated him with sullen contempt. The Professor took no notice of it however, and from her ignorant appearance, I suppose he thought she was only some old Irish Bridget, that Rastus had there for domestic purposes.

When dinner was over, Rastus and the Professor started on the duck hunt, but before they left Rastus apprised her of the fact that the Professor would return with him after the concert was over and remain all night. On hearing this Letta became more hostile then before, and declared her intention to insult him on his return. Rastus paid no attention to her threat, but went on duck hunting. She quarrelled with me all the afternoon for having treated him civil while at the table. She said she did not intend for him to go in the parlor upon their return from the concert that evening. She said, "I intend to go to bed and when he comes you shall bring him in my bed room, and tell him I want to hear the violin." Letta's object in so doing was that she might humiliate me as she thought I would be afraid to disobey her, but I decided to fool her that time, as I would rather have been

whipped then to be mortified in my feelings in that way. So after she went to bed that evening I slipped around and made a fire in the parlor and then kept a close lookout for him. Soon there was a rap at the door and opening it I saw it was the Professor. I lead him into the parlor. I asked him for his hat and coat as I presented a chair. Notwithstanding at that time I was a grown young lady, I had been abused and humiliated so severely by Letta and Rastus, from 10 years of age and they had my nervous system so shattered that our inviting the Professor in the parlor against her orders that I actually trembled with fear, though I knew her mandate as to where I should conduct him was rediculously wrong and for the purpose of humiliating me as well as to show her contempt for the Professor and that it was right to invite him in the parlor, and in that instant disobey her order.

When Rastus came in he asked the Professor for some music and he entertained us on the violin for about an hour and when he was through Letta called me to her bed room saying, "Didn't I forbed you showing him into the parlor, how dare you disobey me. Why dedn't you bring him in here? I will settle with you in the morning and I witl learn you to build a fire in the parlor for music teachers that go around and tell people that they can sing round notes and that music has keys to it and reading letters on a staff; nobody but a fool would listen to such lies as that, for a staff is only a cain like old people walk with. I happen to know what a staff is, as my father walked with a cane and he always called his cane a staff, and now that smart elick bobs up among a lot of donkeys and tells them that music is written on a staff and has keys. The bible says, "The fool and his money are easily parted," and he has met a whole lot of fools here and has got their money." Just then Rastus came in and said, "Letta, what is the matter with you now?" I told him that Letta was mad because I did not bring

the Professor in here instead of taking him in the parlor. "Why Letta," said he, "would you want him in here. Now that is pretty,—want a gentleman brought into your bedroom! Now aren't you making a fool of yourself." Rastus then returned to the parlor and after showing the Professor to bed retired and all was quiet the balance of the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

Adie Bradly was eleven years old when her mother died, and as her father was addicted to strong drink he lost all his property and was in such destitute circumstances as to render him unable to provide for her and her little sister and brother, Maudie and Clarence. Letta was aware of their destitute condition, and as she had some suspicion that I would marry in spite of all her efforts to prohibit me, she thought to be sure of some one to fill my place. So she went to Mr. Bradly and asked him to let her have charge of Addie. "Now" said Letta to Joe Bradly, "if you will let me have Addie I will educate her, and as Vicky was my favorite sister I feel it my duty to look after the welfare of her children, and you know that you can't keep house with them, and the best thing you can do is to divide the children between Mealia, Betsy Ann and myself." Joe at first hesitated as he did not know what would be the best thing for him to do. "You can't leave them here alone nor you can't take them with you when you are out on business" said Letta. Joe was thoroughly conversant with his sister-in-law, Letta Readen's avoricious and fiendish disposition and knowing that Vicky would not be happy in heaven if she knew he would place one of her orphan children in Letta's charge. It was then

that Vicky's words rang in his ears. The words she spoke while on her dying bed two days before she died. She called him to her bedside and putting her arms around his neck she said, "Joe, I am going to die and I have one request to make of you, my dear husband. Promise me this one thing as my last and dying request that you will never let Letta have any of our children, you know what a tyrant she is and what a slave she has made of poor Lou, who by the death of her mother, unfortunately fell in bad hands. As Lou is now grown, she will not stay with her much longer and it is likely that Letta will want another child that she can humiliate and enslave, and will make you any kind of a promise to get Adie or Maudie in her clutches."

Letta discovered that Joe was a little intoxicated and thought it her best to do her most earnest pleading knowing that if he was inclined to yield at all he would be more apt to do so while under the influence of whiskey. Letta plead long and earnestly, and even forced tears to her eyes in order to reach his sympathies, but he was not so much intoxicated as not to have his presence of mind; but promised her that he would study about it. and see her again. When Letta was gone, Joe called Adie to him and asked her if she thought she would like to live with her aunt Letta, "I would not like to make my home with aunt Letta long, but if you think it best for the present I will go and stay with her until you can provide a better place for me." So he decided to let Adie go to Letties for the present, but kept his intentions to himself, and Letta took Adie home with her, thinking she had another niece to enslave to fill Lou's place, but when Letta got home with Adie, Rastad said to her: "I told you, you should not take any of Vickey's children. Letta said to Rastus, "I think Lou is engaged to marry and will be out of our power soon, and if I can't succeed in breaking her engagement, and she marries, I want Adie to fill her place at work."

“Fill Lou’s place at work” said Rastus, “indeed you shall not take another girl here to do work that you ought to do yourself. You shall not keep Adie. When Lou is gone you shall do the work yourself.” But Letta over powered Rastus, and kept Adie. And as previously stated she thought she had a deed to the place and property, she told Rastus that she would give him to understand that he had no more power on that farm than the horse that pulled the plow. Rastus knew the place was mortgaged by his brother James for all it was worth, and when the mortgage fell due, Letta would then look up her deed and find it subject to the mortgage, she would then set her tune to a louder key. So he thought he would submit for the present.

Letta’s next move was to persuade Adie’s father to let her take Adie’s mother’s household goods, and store them at her house. She suggested to Joe that he move his household goods to her house as she would allow him to store them free of rent. Joe became more dissipated after Vicky’s death and spent every cent of money that he could get for whiskey, and was considerably under the influence of the monster when Letta made him that offer. He told her that he would break up housekeeping and store such things as he might need when he got better settled. Letta offered him the use of a wagon and team to haul his goods. Joe accepted the proposition and moved everything he had in the line of household goods to Letta’s house for storage. When all was moved Letta hired a colored woman to wash the bed clothing and wearing apparel and made Joe pay the wash bill. After this was done Letta took all of the children’s clothes and all his sheets and pillow slips and even took his feather beds, and crowded all the feathers into one tick, and then she cut everything up and made carpet rags of them. Among the things was the clothing that Vicky’s two little sons, that were dead, had worn. When Adie discovered the clothes of her little brothers she said,

"Aunt Letta you must not make carpet rags of these clothes for they were little Claudio's and Charlie's and mamma has kept them sacred every since their death. I know she would not be happy now if she knew they were made into carpet rags. Now do please let me put them away, just to remember them by and for the respect sister and I have for our poor dead mamma and little dead brothers." "Why I will pay for them" said Letta. "No I don't want pay, I want to keep the clothes and if you tear them into carpet rags I will tell papa." said Adie. Letta then promised Adie that she would not make the clothes into carpet rags, but in order to get the clothes made into carpet rags she told Adie she might go and spend the day with Miss Dora Meyer. As soon as Adie was gone, Letta cut the little clothes and made carpet rags of them. She then told me that if I ever told Adie she would give me trouble. She then took the fragments and put them in a barrel, and when Adie came home she told her that if she would gather and save up all the old papers, rags and old iron that she could find, and put them in a barrel, she might sell them when a man came that would buy them, and by those means she would have a little spending money for herself. "Very well," said Adie, "I will save all I can find, but where are those little clothes of my little brothers?" "Oh, I put them away for you" Letta replied, "you need not worry about them, they are all right." Adie being only a child, and not knowing what a demon Letta was, supposed she told the truth, therefore she said nothing more about them.

As I had been under her tyrant iron will and knowing it would only make matters worse to tell Adie, I said nothing to her about the clothes. As Adie was very anxious to get a little money to spend, she took a great deal of pains to gather all the old iron, paper and rags that she could possibly get hold of and soon had the barrel filled. It happened that a man came by

after them when Adie was not at home, but Letta sold them and put the money in her own pocket. So when Adie came home and learned that Letta sold them, she asked her for the money for them. Letta answered her saying she did not intend to give her the money. "Why aunt Letta you promised me I might have the money." said Adie. "Don't you sass me, you little impudent pauper!" Adie began to cry, and Letta stormed out at her saying, "dry up or I will kill you." "No you won't kill me," said Adie, and I intend to tell papa how you have treated me, and what is more I will not gather anymore rags for you." Letta then sneaked away and when she got where she thought Adie could not hear her she said, "I will not keep that mean little rip, if she continues to sass me in this way and threatens to tell her old drunken daddy on me. I will ship her, and if I find Lou will marry I will get Maudie and if I can succeed in preventing Lou from marrying, I will make her do the work as long as I can succeed in keeping her and I intend to do everything in my power to break her and Dickerson up, and if I do succeed, she is not likely to have another chance soon. I will not be bothered with Adie as long as her old daddy is around.

After taking a second consideration however, Letta thought to make it up with Adie as her father had been talking of leaving Missouri and was liable to go out West at any time. So if Adie's father went West she would then tighten the reins on her, as she said, for Adie would then have no one to protect her, and she would not be afraid to beat her at any time she dared to open her mouth to say a word back to her. So she called Adie to her and said, "Adie I want to talk to you but you must not tell anybody anything I tell you except Lou. Now listen to me, I love you and I want to see you do well. I want you and Lou to stay with me and be good and work, and if you will stay the balance of my life, and work, and when Rastus gets all

his debts payed, I will make my will and divide my property between you and Lou and Johnny. I have some very valuable things to divide with you and Lou." Adie was pleased to learn that Aunt Letta would remember her in her last will, and the first chance she got she told me about aunt Letta's intention of making her will and when Adie got through relating her story about Aunt Letta's will, I told her that by the time she had learned Letta and knew her as well as I did she would not than believe anything she says. I told her that it was only a scheme she had fitted up to tell her to get her to stay and when she had worked her almost to death and ruined her health at she had mine, she would not give her anything. She will do just as she has been doing. For instance, sometime ago Rastus had two shoats that were sick, and gave them to me to take care of, with the promise that I might have one-half of the money they sold for. So I took good care of them and finally they got well. But I took care of them after they were well and when they were full grown, the hog cholera broke out among the hogs, and one of them sickened and died. I kept the other and took care of it, and when the time came to put it on the market it was the fattest hog I had ever seen, and sold for fifteen dollars. When I wanted my share she said to me, "you have no share in this, and threatened to kill me for wanting to claim my right in the hog.

On another occasion she promised me one-third of all the butter, eggs and chickens that we had that year and I worked harder than any slave ever worked and at the end of the year I reminded her of her promise. She lied flatly out of it and drew an iron rod over my head and threatened to crush my brains out if I dared to speak of it again. In another instance when she was sick with malarie fever last fall, she told me if I would take care of and dry all off the fallen apples she would give me one-half of the money when she

sold them. Notwithstanding she was sick and I sat up at night with her and did all the work during the day I gathered and peeled and dried all the apples that fell and when she sold them they brought six dollars, and she would not give me one cent, but abused me with vile and indecent language. There are many other instances too numerous to mention in which she did the same kind of dishonest tricks and I told Adie she would treat her the same if she got a chance, and so far as Rastus paying his honest debts, that is something he would never do. His note is not worth two cents on the dollar and his word is worth nothing, and Letta is a great deal worse than he is for she causes him to do a great many mean things that he would not otherwise do.

A few days latter Letta made the same proposition to me, Adie and I were to work for her the remainder of her life for an interest in her effects. To encourage us she said she did not think she would live more then ten years, and a few days later thought to further induce us to stay, she made a will, but did not allow us to see it. By watching I found out where she had it hid and when I got an opportunity I read it. Her will read like this: "This is my last will and testament, I bequeath to my son John all my lands and personal property, including all stock and household goods, silverware and sewing machine. I bequeath to my niece Lucy Pierce, one white petticoat with home-made lace around the bottom of it. And one chemise with one pearl button on the band, and home insertion on the sleeves. I bequeath to my niece, Adie Brady, one gray cotton petticoat with a brass button on the band, and one cotton nightgown, with home-made lace around the wrist bands. These I bequeath to them on condition that they remain with me and work for me according to my volition until I die a natural death. And if either of them should get married, or seek home and shelter elsewhere during my life they shall not in-

herit anything from my estate." This will was written in the year 1882 and she is alive now in the year 1900, and has perfect health. She is only fifty-eight years old and bids fair to live fifteen or twenty years more. Now we will add twenty years more to eighteen that she has lived since 1882, the time she willed me the almost worn out petticoat with home-made lace at the lower end, and chemise with a pearl button on.

As the chemise was as baldy worn as the petticoat we will value the two garments at \$1 which any body would object to paying, and we will fix the price of the gray cotton petticoat with the brass button and night gown that she willed to Adie at fifty cents. She told us that she would will me the most as I had been with her twelve years.

Now as I had already been a servant for her twelve years, we will add the twelve years to the eighteen years she has lived since 1882 and we compute thirty years and if the petticoat and chemise had not grown threadbare in the eighteen years ware, and she was to die tomorrow, and the petticoat and chemise was worth \$1, I would have three and one-third cents per year for my thirty years servitude for waiting on an idiot. As previous stated she is still living and in good health and 58 years old, and like all other low principled donkeys she will live more than twenty years more if she can just to be a nuisance in the world, then calculate if you can how many cents per year would I have earned, and as my sole object in writing this book is to open the eyes of people in regard to whose care they place their children. I hope you will excuse me when I again warn you to look out for wolves in sheep's clothing for fear you let them into the hands of a Letta or Rastus.

CHAPTER XX.

Rastus was very cautious in trying to prevent Letta from learning of the mortgage on the farm on which she held a deed, no matter how much she humiliated him by reminding him that he had no home and he never once dropped a word to arouse her suspicion of the mortgage, his brother James had put on the farm before he gave a deed to her, and he always made a show of his money, what little he had on hand, by spending it freely with any peddler or agent that happened to come along. His object in so doing was to keep up the appearance of having plenty money before the public in general, and when ever there happened to be a public sale of any description in the country around, he always attended and bought all the old plunder that was put up for sale if he possibly could get hold of any money. Letta never made any objections to his buying anything as long as he did not pay for it and was willing for him to borrow any amount of money he wanted, provided he could get it so as the loaner could not collect it, and when he went to a sale he usually had a dollar or so in his pocket and when he spent that he would step around to some of his acquaintances and ask them for the loan of a little money with the promise to pay it back in a few days.

On one occasion he went to a sale over on Salt River and there bought an old wash stand, one tin dipper, one bed stead, one pint cup, one hatchet, one water bucket, one set tea cups and saucers, one dish

pan, two chairs and two bushels of dried beans, and all this trumpery, including the dried beans, he only paid one dollar, the beans were several years old, and none of them were sound and many were half rotten and they were a mixture of colored beans and by no means fit to cook. After we had had these beans on hand for over a year there was a failure in the bean crop and Letta had some of these beans cooked but we could not eat them. Then Letta hinted around that she had beans for sale and Mrs. Dollmon, one of our neighbors, heard that Letta had beans for sale, called and purchased a peck of the beans from Letta and asked her the price of them and Letta told her that she was willing to take whatever beans are selling at in the market. Mrs. Dollmon said that if Letta was willing she would inquire in town, and pay the market price, which was agreed to by Letta. Mrs. Dollmon took the beans home and cooked some of them, and found they were rotten, and was then conversant of the fraud Letta knowingly perpetrated upon her, but the amount would be so small as she had only got a peck. She was too intelligent to say anything about it, but she inquired of a merchant the price of mixed beans, and the merchant told her there was no market for mixed beans, which left Mrs. Dollmon without an answer, but the merchant told her that the price of navy beans was fifty cents, but on account of a short crop they would range at times up to seventy-five cents, which Mrs. Dollmon knew would make a little over 12 cents she would owe Letta, if the beans had been sound.

Soon thereafter Letta ordered me to prepare carpet chains in the loom, to weave into carpet the rags she had so cruelly robed her little orphan nieces, Adie and Maudie. In arranging the carpet in the loom, there was not enough of carpet chain to weave 100 yards of carpet, as she supposed she had that much of the children's clothes and bed clothes. As it was but a short distance she went to Mrs. Dollman's and got of

her carpet chain enough to make out the amount she lacked, which she told Mrs. Dollman was worth about ten cents and that she would take it on the beans. Mrs. Dolland supposed the beans were settled for, and some time there after she and her husband were going to move to Montana. Letta hearing that Mrs. Dollman was preparing to move to Montana sent me to tell her to send Letta fifty cents for the beans. I went and told Mrs. Dollman that Letta had said to send her fifty cents for the beans.

Mrs. Dollman said "I would have settled it before now, but I understood Letta that the carpet chain settled it. I inquired in the market and there was no market for mixed beans and that the best beans were seventy five cents a bushel and at that ten cents in carpet chain paid the bill." She said, "we could not eat the beans." But she handed me twenty five cents and said she hope that will be satisfactory. When I arrived at the gate on my return Letta met me and asked me if I had the fifty cents. I answered her that Mrs. Dollman said she thought you said the carpet chain settled the bill, and said she hoped twenty-five cents would be satisfactory. Letta called Mrs. Dollman all the vile names she could think of (and she can think of more vile names to call anybody then she can think of decent words in prayer.) She ordered me to go back and tell Mrs. Dollman all the vile names she called her and get the other twenty five cents. I told her I would not go, and that she knew the beans were rotten. She then drew a large rod over my head and told me to go or she would kill me, but as I was grown she was afraid to strike me. She then turned on Adie, who was then only eleven years old, and told her to go and tell Mrs. Dollman as she had told me. Adie refused to go and carry such language and after all her threats she would not go. She then threatened her son Johnny and tried to force him to carry the filthy and abusive language, but Johnnie said, "Ma I

had rather die than carry such language as that to such a fine lady as Mrs. Dollman and I am going to tell papa when he comes home tonight all about how you have been talking about Mrs. Dollman and trying to make us go and tell it to her."

At the supper table Johnie told his father that his mother had been calling Mrs Dollman all the bad names and said, "Pa, if I was to tell you what she called her you would whip me for using such bad words." Rastus then turned to Letta and said, "Letta what do you mean by such conduct as this? Why, you should be ashamed of yourself to set such an example before these children as to try to force them to use vile and indecent language as that to one of the most refined ladies in the community. You should never have charged her anything for the old rotten beans, and now after she has already paid you four times the worth of good beans you still persist in collecting still more from her, and because Lou or Adie won't go to her with the most vile language from you, you try to force our only child that you ought never to let here anything but the most chased expressions. You are so vile and brutish as to threaten to make him go to her with language he thinks ought to elicit a whipping if he would even dare to repeat to me. I am exceedingly ashamed of you, to think that I have to claim such a brute for a wife and the mother of my only child, is perfectly heart rending to me. And on Sunday mornings at your request I have been holding family worship with the hope that you would try and forsake your wicked ways and try to be a christian, but instead you have grown so mnch worse as to try to send indecent and abusive language to our most refined neighbor, when you should have told her in the out set that they were rotten, and that we could not eat them."

Letta answered him by saying, "you old fool! It is you that is no christian, for the bible says, 'If ye have anything that is not fit to eat youself, sell it to

your neighbor and let him eat it.' That is just what I did and if Mrs. Dollman is Senator Corall's daughter, and the wife of a Colonel in the late civil war, she is no better than any of our other neighbors. So now Rastus just let me tell you I want to hear no more of your bazoon and if I do I will show you who owns this farm and at the same time you will have an opportunity of finding quarters under some other shelter." Rastus knew, but did not dare to tell her that she as good as had no farm, as the time was drawing near when the mortgage would be closed, so he paid no attention to her threat of giving him an opportunity of sheltering elsewhere, but said, "now ain't this a nice state of affairs selling beans to our neighbors and says the bible tells you to do it. Now just show me one passage of Scripture where the bible tells us to sell rotten beans to our neighbors." She answered by saying, "Rastus, this proves that you know nothing about Scripture, I have often noticed in your long, lond and tremulous prayers that there was not a word of Scripture in them and now you ask me to show you a passage of Scripture that as loud a praying christian hypocrite as you are, ought to be perfectly familiar with". Then said Rastus to Johnny, "you stay here until I go out to the barn and see if the horse I road is all right, I road him hard, and he may be sick."

When Rastus returned from the barn he said, "well Letta I know now why yon make such a fool of your self and try to send Lou and Adie and even Johnny to carry such vile and indecent language to Helen Dollman. You have been persuing about the barn, and found the jug of whiskey that Jack had hid out there to keep you from drinking it. The jug is dry now, and I know you are the one that has drank it, for Jack left it half full this morning, and now it is empty. It is a plain case. It was whiskey and not the bible that prompted you to charge four prices for those beans. Well this is the first time I ever heard whiskey called

the bible." "How do you know the jug is empty?" asked Letta. Rastus said he noticed the cork was out of the jug. She asked him how he happened to see the cork was out, but Rastus said he was not blind and he did not have to drink whiskey every time he saw a jug.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I don't care for expenses," said Rastus, "as long as I can borrow money and I intend to have a good time if my debts are never paid, and as Pap and others are going to Butler county on a hunting expidition, and I shall go too as it will only cost me fifty dollars for the round trip and all expenses included; there is nothing like having a good time; so I will go and enjoy myself, and as for my creditors, I will let them do the worrying; my board will not cost me anything while I am there for I will stop with Hugh and Kate as they are my relations, I know they will not charge me for my board." Rastus appears to have forgotton the time his brother James ruined his cousin Hughs daughter Mary Cellen, and he took such an active part in helping James transfer his property when Hugh talked about prosecuting him for damages. However he made the trip and remained with Hugh and Kate six or seven weeks and when he was ready to return home he invited their daughter Zeala to come home with him. Zeala accepted the invitation and when she was ready to start her mother told her she must visit with Letta and Rastus at least a week, for the sake of courtesy, and then divide her time and visits among the balance of her relations. When Zeala had been with us two days

Letta began to begrudge what she eat and to treat her coolly, and on the third day she asked Zeala if she would like to go and visit Miss Rhoda Sweeden, and Zeala told her that she intended to visit Miss Rhoda before returning home. Zeala was only sixteen years old and had a good disposition and never once thought of Letta wanting to get rid of her and had no idea there was as low and mean a principled being on earth as Letta was, and for that reason she took no exception to Lettas asking her if she would like to go and visit Miss Sweeden. Every time Letta could get an opportunity to speak to me when Zeala could not hear it, she would say to me, "I want Zeala to leave here; I am tired of her eating my grub, and I want you to quit treating her so nicely, as I want her to go." She spoke to me in this way several times regarding Zealas stay before I made any reply to her, as I had always refrained from answering her when I considered she was in the wrong from the fact that I knew she was cold, selfish and illiberal in her views and possessed but little talent and a physiognomy of large self will and her stubbornness could not be excelled and I knew to try to reason with her would only add fuel to the flames, but as she continued to annoy me every time she thought she would not be heard by Zeala. I finally ventured to tell her that Zeala had told me that her mother had told her to spend at least a week with us, as Rastus had been with them six weeks, and invited her to return with him and visit us and make his house her home and from there visit with the rest of her relatives. At this she became furious and said to me, "She shall not stay here a week and eat my grub if Rastus did stay at her father's six weeks, but she needn't think she will get even with him by coming here and eating my grub, and Rastus had no right to invite her here. He would not care if she stayed here 'till she eats up all of my grub. This is my farm and Rastus has no home to invite anybody to come and

stay a whole week. I intend to send her away tomorrow if she don't leave of her own accord." The next day was the fourth day of her stay and as soon as breakfast was over Letta said to her, "Zeala do you want to go down to Rhoda Sweeden's today." "No I don't want to go down there this week; I want to visit the people around here before I go down there," said Zeala. "Well I think you had better go," said Letta, "as you can have a horse to ride today, and this is the only day the horses will be idle." Oh! that doesn't make any difference as I can walk," said Zeala. "Well now you had better go when you can ride as it is too far for you to walk," said Letta. "Oh no it is not, I walk farther than that lots of times and I don't mind walking that distance," said Zeala. "Well it will wear your shoes too much," said Letta. "That don't matter as I have an old pair I can wear," said Zeala. Letta was then dumbfounded as to what to say to her next, and left the room and went out in the back yard and yelled to me to come out there. When I went out to where she was she said to me, "Why don't you give her a hint to go; I believe you want her to stay, for I can see how nice you are toward her, now if you don't get her to go you shall pay her board. When we went into the house Letta said, "Zeala you had better go down to Rhoda Sweedens for it is going to rain to night, and after a hard rain the road will be so muddy that you can't travel over them at all." To my relief Zeala consented to go and when she was gone Letta said to me, "Now don't you dare to tell Rastus about me making Zeala leave, and I didn't want her here eating my grub any longer.

Zeala remained away a week or ten days. She returned because she had not visited her relatives in that vicinity and when Letta saw her coming she said, "Now here comes that Zeala back here. I suppose she intends to stay around here and eat off of me again but I'll veto that so she shan't eat supper here." When

Zeala came to the house, Letta asked her if she was going over to her grandmothers. Zeala looked as if she felt as though she were not welcomed. She said she would like to go that afternoon or the next morning. "Well," said Letta, "Lou can take you there this afternoon, but she can't go tomorrow." Then she called me away and ordered me to saddle old Bell and Fanny and take Zeala to her grandmother's. I saddled the horses and went with her, as ordered. It was five miles and over the worst road I ever travelled.

On my return home I had to lead one of the horses and in one place I went down into a gulch to water the horses, and when I turned to come out of the gulch the halter of the horse I was leading got roped around my arm and the horse stopped. I could not stop the horse I was riding so I was pulled off. I thought my time to quit this world had come, for the horse I was riding had never been known to fail to kick everything to pieces that touched him about the heels, but in that case Providence provided for me. When I was dragged down behind him he stood perfectly still, until I could extricate myself. I then lead the horses out of the gulch and to a place that I could again get back into the saddle. As I got home it was dark and Letta was still waiting for me to come home to prepare supper. Letta said, "now I have worked that Zeala off the second time and I hope she will not return. I don't want any poor people hanging around me and eating up my grub and not paying for it. I don't care if they are kin people. Just to think that while she was here we ate a half gallon of tomatoes and a whole head of cabbage, and two dozen tomatoes that I could have sold for money. Now just think of the idea! A girl staying around among her kin folks, and so stuck up that she won't drink butter milk or eat apples, either mellow or fresh off the tree. I handed both to her one morning at the breakfast table and she refused them. I suppose she thought apples and buttermilk were too plentiful and consequently too cheap for her to eat",

CHAPTER XXII

I can say with a clear conscience that Letta and Rastus treated me worse than slave holders ever treated their negroes when in bondage. Negroes were allowed holidays and were usually given Saturday afternoon in which to enjoy themselves. If any of them were sick they were properly nursed. I was never allowed holidays, not even Christmas day. But on the other hand they exercised their tyrannical power by enforcing me to do an extra amount of work on every Christmas day. They made it a rule to save up a large washing to be done on that day. No matter what day in the week Christmas came on, unless it happened to come on Sunday, Rastus and Letta always went out to Christmas dinner, and I was always invited as I was supposed to be one of the family. I was never allowed to accept any invitations. The first words that Letta usually spoke to me Christmas morning was, "Lou hurry up and get breakfast, so you can go to washing. You will have all the stock to feed and water at noon, as all the hired hands are gone. Rastus and I are going out to dine." So I had to stay at home and do a heavy days washing, and then scrub the kitchen floor, and at noon I had to feed from one to three hundred hogs, and from ten to fifteen head of horses, and look after and feed from two to three hundred head of chickens, geese, ducks, pea fowls, turkeys and guineas, and they even kept five or six dogs, that I had to feed. And then I had to continue my washing until I finished it. Besides I had to feed and milk from twelve to fifteen cows, twice a day and churn, by hand, from five to six gallons of cream and then wash and take care of the milk vessels. And then I had to prepare supper

for Letta, Rastus and several of the hired hands that would be back for supper. Letta was never known to help me cook or prepare a meal.

Now let me humbly ask the reader if I did not have a hard task? And especially on Christmas days. If you doubt the above statements and will write to me I will give you references that will answer you substantiating the facts. I had to do such a days work about once a week, when it was wash day, but when the hired hands were home they generally done the feeding of the horses and hogs. I had all the balance of the above work to do, and feed the milk cows and poultry. And the same task for every day in the week except washing day. Then is it surprising to anybody that when I married and left them I was so afflicted from exposer and overwork, that for a year before I left them I had to prop myself up in bed at night, to be able to breathe?

During my stay and servitude, of twelve years neither Rastus nor Letta had given me one of cent money. Letta never gave me a present of any kind. The only present Rastus ever gave me was a small glass mug, on one Christmas, when he bought two and gave Letta one and the other one to me. Letta was never willing for me to learn anything more than drudgery work. Even when I picked up a newspaper to try to read she always grabbed it from me or would storm at me saying, "Put that paper down and get to work and stop fooling your time away trying to read. There is no sense in poor people wasting their time reading. Education is worthless to anybody except teachers." I was very anxious to obtain an education but I was so trampled down by she and Rastus, that I had no power within myself to defie them and avail myself of protection.

I at one time told Letta that I wanted a grammar to study, as I realized that I was deficient in language to properly express my ideas. She answered me say-

ing, "you shall not study grammar. There is no sense in it I studied grammar from the time I was six years old, until I was sixteen, and I didn't know any more about it when I finished school than I did before I ever went to school. Grammar was gotten up by men to sell, to make money from. There are always some rascals springing up something to sell the fools and there always will be fools to buy. Nobody needs grammar to learn to talk. It is natural to talk. Hogs grunt and squeal, horses neigh, and mules bray and dogs bark and they don't study grammar. Now can't you see that grammar was only got up to get people's money away from them. No you cannot have a grammar and don't you let me hear another word about it."

Another time I wanted to study geography and as Rastus was going to town I asked him to buy one for me. I told him that he had promised to educate me, and as long as he would not let me go to school I would like to learn a little at home. He got the geography for me and when he returned home he laid it on the table among other things that he had bought. When Letta discovered it she picked it up and asked what it was. Rastus told her that it was a geography for me. She said, "now do you intend to let her fool her time away studying geography? I intend to send it right back. She shall not have it." She then came and began to abuse me for having asked for it. She said, "you shan't fool a minute of your time away learning geography. I taught school before I was married, and I never knew anything about geography or grammar. When anybody knows as much as I do they know enough. When I taught school they used Websters spelling book, and McGuffy's reader, and Ray's arithmetic. When anybody can read in the fourth reader that is enough for anybody to read at school, and when they get to long division that is enough in arithmetic. That is as far as I ever got in arithmetic,

and when any of the children got to long division I turned them back.

Letta never liked to admit that anybody knew more then she did notwithstanding she said there was no one on earth that could learn to read round notes and that they were only intended to be used on an instument. When she heard that her sister-in-law had bought an organ she said it was strange that people who pretended to have half-sense would fool their mon-ey away buying such a thing as an organ while common sense would teach any fool that no one could play a tune on one of those things. "Now, said she, "there are more fools in this section of the country than there are in any other portion of the world. It is a fine thing the fool killer has never been around or he would come here with a double-gearred fool-killing machine. And just to think that uncle Lafe was fool enough to buy his daughter Paty Belle an organ. And I know she has a white elephant on her hands. For she can't learn to play a tune on such a machine as that. Instrumental music is something that can't be learned for they used round notes in playing on an organ and they all look exactly alike. I am afraid the fool killer will hear of this settlement and leave us without neighbors. Finally her sister-in-law, Mrs. Role, invited her to come and spent the afternoon with her. Letta accepted the invitation and while there she heard Mrs. Role play several tunes on the organ. And soon thereafter she heard several of her neighbors play on their organs.

And finally she said, "Well it is a little strange to me, but they actually play tunes with round notes." "Now" said she, "Rastus I can't afford to let all our neighbors and girls in this country be that far ahead of me. You know that I am the smartest woman that you ever saw if not the superior to any woman in the world and you've got to get me an organ." Rastus asked her if she wasn't afraid the fool-killer would hear

of that settlement and come there with a one-fool, single-gearred machine and leave him without a wife. "Well, but Rastus," said she, "Mrs. Role showed me how to run do, ra, mi, fa, sol, la, on the organ and since she showed me that I have caught on to a new idea. When you get me an organ I will show these monkey heads around here that I can learn so fast that I will soon be away ahead of them." She said she would get the Louisiana Journal, and cut the letters out of it that she wanted. She said that she knew D stood for do and R. for ra and M stands for me. At her saying M. stands for me, Rastus yelled out that he would like to know how in thunder M. stood for her, "Well, now Rastus, don't be so fast" she said, "you just listen to me a little. There is a note called me, and I will put the letter M on that note that stands for me, and I am going to put them letters on those white things that they put their fingers on. Then I will know where to play the tunes I want to play." Finally Rastus told her that he would give her a cow that she could sell and get an organ.

At that very time if they could have paid their honest debts they would not have had a dollar left. At that time they owed me \$50 but Letta plainly told Rastus he should never pay me. She called me the most vile and indecent names because I wanted my money. The next time Letta saw Mrs. Roles she told her that she had decided to buy an organ. Mrs. Role told her that she could buy a second hand organ from the Methodist minister's wife in Lousiana. So Letta lost no time until she saw the lady and asked her if she had an organ for sale. Mrs Leadbetter said she wanted to sell her organ and buy a good milch cow. Letta told her that she had several fine milch cows and would be willing to give her one for the organ. Mrs. Leadbetter consented to this agreement, so the next day Letta sent for the organ and then sent the cow. The preacher decided not to milk the cow until

morning as she had been driven seven or eight miles from Rastus house to his place. The next morning the preacher went to the lot with his milk bucket. This cow was small and nobody but myself could milk her and I always had to hem her in one corner of the fence where I could put a rail up to keep her there while milking. She only gave two quarts of milk per day and when I would get nearly done milking her she would kick the milk cup out of my hand. The preacher thought the cow was only shy of him as he was a stranger to her. He soon thought of the idea of hemming her in a corner so he could put up a rail and confine her there. He then proceeded to milk her and he said that just about the time he got nearly all the milk he could get, which, he said, was about a pint, she kicked the milk cup over his head and spilt the milk on his \$30 suit of clothes that his members had given him. When the milk cup went over his head it knocked his hat off and the cow stepped in it, cutting several holes through it with her sharp hoofs. She kicked him five times before he could get out of her way and at the same time tore several holes in his new breeches and she kicked the skin off of him in three places. She also hit him on the knee and made him lame so that he had to use a cane for a week. They turned the cow out and let her go back to Letta's place.

The preachers's wife soon made it convenient to see Letta, and told her she had acted in bad faith. That the cow she should have given was to have been a good milk cow, but this cow gave but little milk and was a dangerous cow to milk. "Now," said she, "you must pay me for the organ or bring it back. I could have sold it for cash but I thought I would accomodate you by trading with you, but as you have acted so unlady like as to impose a fraud upon me, I demand the return of the organ or the money. Letta agreed to pay for the organ, provided she would take the money in installments. The minister's wife consented to do

so and Letta paid her a little money at a time until she had paid the full amount which was twenty-five dollars.

During this time Letta had cut letters from the Louisiana Journal and pasted them on the C scale on the organ, placing D. on C., R on D and M on E and F in its proper place, and S on G, L on A and C on B. She then ran her fingers over the octave saying, do, ra, me, fa, so, la, se, do. She did not know what the sharps and flats were for but thought they were used to let air in the organ. Letta spent the most of her time playing the organ. She tried to learn some of the old tunes she heard her father sing during his life. Whenever she saw any person coming from either end of the road that she knew would pass the house, she would run and sit by the organ and sing and play, do, do, do, me, me, sol, sol, do, just as loud as she could yell, and whenever there were any men around the house she tried to entertain them by making all the noise she could on the organ. Rastus was so proud that his wife could, as he thought, play the organ, he invited Mr. Graphen, a Methodist minister, to come and hear her sing and perform on the organ. Rastus did not know any more about music then Letta, consequently he thought she was up to date in music and was anxious to have Mr. Graphen make them a visit and hear her play. Finally Mr. Graphen made them a visit one afternoon and remained over night. After supper they asked him to sing with them. The song was selected and Letta began to play on the organ. Mr. Graphen who was an educated man that had been raised it the city, knew something about music. He and Rastus started to sing the words while Letta began do, do, do, me, me, sol, sol, sol, se, se, se, la, la, se, do.

It is no use to try to tell how queer Mr. Graphen looked at Letta and then at Rastus, as he lost track of the tune as well as the words. He didn't seem to know if she was trying to play Old Hundred or Yankee

Doodle and he finaly said, "Sister Readen, I can't sing that way, I guess you have got a different way of singing and playing here to what I have been accustomed to. Suppose we try something that we are all familiar with." Letta finaly found one that she said she was familiar with and sounded the organ. Rev. Graphen started the words as before and Rastus was determined that the tune should not break down that time. He thought to sing loud was the way to be sure of success, so Rastus started in two or three notes higher than the Rev. Graphen and Letta began on the organ, do, do, do, me, me, me, sol, sol, se, se, do. The Rev. Graphen lost track of tune and words sooner than before and he looked at Rastus and then at Letta and said, "Brother and Sister, I don't claim to know as much about music as some people and tonight it seems that I know less than I thought I did. I heard of a negro musician that was raised down in Georgia that could play twe different tunes on a piano at the same time and sing a third, carrying three tunes at the same time, but it seems to take all three of us to do that here tonight." When they closed the musical entertainment Rastus presented the bible to Rev. Graphen, from which he read a chapter, and we all bowed in prayer, then we all retired for the night. After breakfast in the morning the preacher gave us a cordial invitation to visit his family and said that he was a soliciting shipping agent for the Long Line Rail Road and had the right to grant free passes to any of his friends and would be pleased to give us free passes at any time.

Letta accepted the invitation and set a time to make the visit. Rev. Graphen's home was at La Grange, Mo. The railroad passed through Hanibal and as I had a brother living there, that I had not seen in several years, I told Letta that when she went on the free passes that I would be glad to go as far as Hanibal and visit my brother as he was quite low at that time with brain fever. She said that I could

not go if he was sick and that I should stay at home and work and that Mr. Graphen didn't mean that he would give me a free pass and that he only meant the family. I said to her, "You and Uncle Rastus promised to make me one of the family when you persuaded papa to let you have me." "Don't you mention that again, you wretch you," she said, "or I will break your head with this poker," and drew over my head a heavy iron rod which we used for poking the fire. I was never one of the family except when there was work to be done and then I was the only member in the house in in the work line, for work is something she never would do.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was in the year 1881 when Letta claimed to have been warned by God in a dream that it was her duty as a christian to organize a Sunday school at the Sugar Creek Baptist church and she related that in a dream the spirits had impressed on her mind that she was committing a wicked sin in patronizing the Methodist Sunday school. Rastus vehemently opposed her organizing a Baptist Sunday school saying he would not allow his horses used to take any of us to a blamed old Baptist Sunday school and that his child should not

attend a Baptist Sunday school as he would rather see him dead than have such an absurd doctrine instilled in his mind. They quarreled all the week over their difference of opinion on religion. When Sunday came Letta went to church in the morning and she talked with some of the most prominent members in regard to organizing a Sunday school at that place. When services were over the minister announced to the congregation that there would be a meeting at that place that afternoon at four o'clock for the purpose of organizing a Sunday school. When we met in the afternoon, the membership not being very large they did not deem it policy to call it a Baptist school, but thought it would be better to have a union school. After the subject was discussed by the members a union school was decided upon, and some of the teachers elected. At the same time Rastus was elected superintendent as a compliment to Letta.

When Letta returned home she told Rastus of the honor conferred upon him. Rastus made many derogative expression in regard to their electing him superintendent, but on the next Sunday however he lost no time in being on hand at the church to fill his office. At that meeting the question arose as to what hour the school should be held. All voted for four in the afternoon except Letta who wanted it at five in the afternoon. After some discussion it was decided to hold it at four, for it was thought that five o'clock was too late for some of the parties to return home for evening chores.

The next week was a week of abuse for me from Letta for not voting for it at five o'clock, as she did. When Sunday came Rastus went in time for four o'clock Sunday school but Letta would not go or let me go until five. When we got there teachers and pupils were leaving for home. So the following week was Rastus week of vent of her vile tongue because he held the school at four, and did not honor her by wait-

ing till her hour at five. The next Sunday Rastus again held the school at four o'clock. As before Letta and myself went at five as on the previous Sunday and were just in time to see them leaving. After Rastus heard from her one more week, he decided that five o'clock would be as early an hour as he could conveniently leave home. So when we all got to the church, all parties had decided from what they had heard from the headquarters, that the inspiration Letta had about organizing a Sunday school, was a kind of home made fabrication, and they met no more.

I kindly extend due credit to the intelligent teachers and pupils of that Sunday school for their correct opinion as to Letta's fabrication about her spirit inspiration that she was called upon to organize a Sunday school. To ventilate a little of her religion I will relate one incident. During the time she was so zealously working up the Sunday school there was a gentleman traveling with his family, and he upon seeing so many cows sent a small girl in to buy five cents worth of sweet milk from Letta. This gentleman wanted the milk for a sick baby he had and whose mother was dead. Letta ordered me to sell the child butter milk. The child told us that the baby was sick and could not drink buttermilk. Letta took the nickle and again stormed at me to give her buttermilk. The child being helpless took the buttermilk to her father who sent it back with a special prayer for the sick baby to have sweet milk. Letta finally let the child have a pint of sweet milk. But sweet milk was so cheap in that section that nobody ever thought of charging a traveler anything for it, and as to buttermilk it could not be sold at all. I will give one more instance in which she demonstrated the quality of her piety. At one time Letta's mother made Letta's sister a present of a horse. This made Letta angry because her mother had not given it to her and she said she was tempted to poison the water where the horse drank so as to kill him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Rastus and Letta were the two most unreasonable people I ever had any dealings with, and their tyranny is surpassed by none. These christian people had ten acres of land which they kept as a clover and timothy field and joining this was ten acres more which they kept for pasturing their stock. This track of land lay on the south side of their farm, the county road, which is known as the Louisiana and Frankford road, divided the farm. Their houses and other buildings stood on the north side of the road and from the time they first got me in their clutches they imposed upon me the burden of driving their cattle and other stock that was being used on the farm, across the ten acre meadow of clover and timothy every morning and evening during the season they kept their stock in pasture. I was compelled to drive ten to twenty head of horses and cattle through this meadow in order to get them in the pasture and I always drove them as hurridly as I could without frightening them and causing them to scatter, and because I could not prevent the stock from biting the grass off as they passed through the meadow, Letta would abuse me shamefully.

I wish there was a premium offered for the meanest married couple on earth and it could be known by the judges exactly how mean each couple were that were brought before them. If I was allowed to present a pair of them I would be sure to present Letta and Rastus and I know they would carry off the prize. Letta and Rastus are both mean though I am bound to admit that Letta is the worst of the two, but between them there is nothing lacking in the line of meanness. Of the two Letta is the most adapt in planning mean-

ness but I will put Rastus against the world as an apt scholar under her teachings.

CHAPTER XXV:

At one time Rastus was elected one of the board of school directors of the Grassy Creek school. During the term which he held the office the school burned down. The building was insured for more than it cost to rebuild it. Rastus immediately notified the Insurance company of the disaster and after they made a thorough investigation paid the amount of insurance. Rastus would not allow anyone to have the contract of rebuilding the house, but took it himself. I was informed by a party, who claimed to know that there was forty dollars of the insurance money left after all costs were paid, which should have been put in the school treasury but Rastus gave no account of the residue of the money.

I will relate another circumstances where in Rastus made a demonstration of his integrity: A number of years ago there was a track of land which lay in the valley, between the Salt and Mississippi river. Several thousand of acres lay in this track of land and it was known as the Point. I suppose it got its name from the fact that it lay in a point between the two rivers, where Salt river emptied into the Mississippi. This track of land was fertile, but could not be cultivated on account of the overflow of the rivers. It produced an abundance of different kinds of nuts and berries and very fine grass. There were the hickory, walnut, pecans, acorns hack berries, Yorkenuts and all kinds of haws. As this slope of land was not inclosed

except by the two rivers on the east and west sides the public at large took advantage of the opportunity of using the range. Many farmers have accumulated great wealth by herding their stock on that land, while a great many men have been made paupers by the rivers rising unexpectedly and drowning all their stock in which they had invested all their money.

One season Rastus put some hogs on this range; and there was a gentleman by the name of Cherrie, who also had hogs there. When the time came to gather their stock off the range Rastus built a pen and drove several head of hogs in it and left them there. Mr. Cherrie came along and left them out, but when Rastus found the hogs were out he penned them in. So when Mr. Cherrie found his hogs in the pen the second time he again turned them out and upon meeting Rastus a short distance from the pen asked him why he had put his (Cherrie's) hogs in the pen. Rastus denied the charge saying he had penned no hogs except his own. Mr. Cherrie disputed his denial, saying, "you knew they were not yours, for you have no hogs of that blood in stock." Rastus declared he put them in the pen in good faith. Then Mr. Cherrie said, "now Rastus you are a d—n liar. You knew well enough those hogs did not belong to you and you intended to steal my hogs."

Rastus thought it looked bad to be called a liar and thief and thought he would bluff Cherrie by striking at him, (both were on their horses.) Mr. Cherrie returned the blow and knocked Rastus off of his horse, and then jumped off from his own and they went into a real old fashioned fist fight and during the performance while Rastus was putting in all the fight he could muster up, and calling out, help, murder, come quick or it will be too late? Rastus' father and some other men being a short distance away heard his appeals for help and they got on their horses and rode as rapidly as possible to his assistance. When they arrived his

father jumped off his horse and attempted to part them at the same time exclaiming, "Rastus! Rastus! Rastus! What in the world do you mean by fighting this way?" Rastus' father seeing he could not part them called for more help. The other men quickly loaned their assistance and the performers were parted. The old man then said to Rastus, "I am actually ashamed of you. You have disgraced our family by fighting. It must be your fault for this is your third fight within the last three months." "He called me a d—n liar, and hog thief," said Rastus. "Well you must not be a liar or a hog thief or you can get up fights on many occasions. Now you must quit such business as this. Besides your face being bruised, and your nose mashed, and all bloody, I ain't here if he hasn't bit one of your ears off, for it is gone."

When he got home his nose was twice as large as natural size and his eyes were swollen shut; his face was almost like a piece of hamberger steak and he was blood from head to foot. Letta happened to be in the front yard and on his appearance she said, "What is the matter with you?" "I have been in a fight," he said. "Who with?" she asked. "With one of the Cherrie boys," he replied. "What were you and him fighting about?" said Letta. "For putting hogs in a pen that he claimed," said Rastus. "Which whipped?" said Letta. "I admit that Cherrie whipped me, and besides he has bit one of my ears off," said Rastus. "I suppose you kept the hogs?" she asked. "No he took them," said Bastus. "Now I have a mind to kick you off of my premises for not bringing the hogs home with you. In the first place you might have known better than to put them in a pen and let any body find them. Now ain't you a pretty thing to let him have the hogs and whip you in the bargain, and even brand you with his mark. I suppose when he gets hold of a hog when he has no knife, he bites the ear off?" Letta was so indignant on account of him getting whipped,

and losing the hogs too, that she would not speak a civil word to him for a month, but finally Rastus told her that he intended to sue Cherrie for damages, for mutilating him and put him in the penitentiary too. The thoughts of obtaining damages was the sweetest music that had enlivened Letta's ear for a long time and was a great consolation to her. Money was her daily theme, as she was always on the look out for money. She cared not from whence it came, except from labor by her own hands and labor was an abhorrence if she thought there was any danger of its steering in her direction.

Mr. Cherrie heard of Rastus threatening to sue him for damages and of prosecuting him for the penitentiary. The next time he met Rastus, he said, "I heard of your threats of suing me for damages, and of proposing suit to put me in the penitentiary. Now, Rastus, if I hear another word of this threat from you, I will give you my word that I will clip your other hog-stealing ear, before I send you to the penitentiary for hog stealing, so that your balance will be true on the hog stealing question." It is no use to say that Rastus said no more about the suit against Mr. Cherrie. Thereafter Rastus was the best judge of hogs in that whole country. He even knew the blood of every hog and even knew to whom each and every hog belong and especially the whole Cherrie generation's hogs were safe from Rastus's mistaking them for his. Rastus is an expert judge of hogs to this day in 1900, and if anybody does not believe this hog story just let them look for his absent ear, for he is now living in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

CHAPTER XXVI.

If there is anything in phrenology, Letta has the bumps of cautioness much larger then Rastus. For after dealing in turkeys she still has two ears and the

price of six more turkeys than she is entitled too. In order that the reader may more thoroughly understand how she managed to succeed in escaping with both of her ears and the turkeys, I will explain how she worked the scheme. Letta kept every variety of turkey that she knew of, excepting the large gray turkeys. No one in the community had any of these large gray turkeys except Letta's mother-in-law, Mrs. Readen, and a Miss Jackson. One day Letta called on her mother-in-law and when the servant girl called the turkeys to feed them, the old lady asked Letta to walk out with her and see what a nice flock of gray turkeys she had raised that season. When they got to the flock Letta remarked to her mother-in-law, that she admired her gray turkeys very much and expressed a great desire to get in a stock of them, but at the same time said that she was not able to buy, as she had no money. Her mother-in-law quickly perceived that Letta was scheming for a present of a turkey so she said that she would give her a nice turkey. Letta accepted the turkey and took it home with her. Soon afterwards she bought one from Miss Jackson. "Now," said Letta, "I have a good start in turkeys, I have the yellow, white, brown, bronze and gray, but I like the gray best of all." She succeeded in keeping them over winter, but in the spring the cholera broke out among the turkeys and one of the gray turkey hens got sick. I doc-tored it until I lost all hopes of its recovery and Letta told me I need not treat her any longer, as it was grow-ing worse and she said she knew it would die from the fact that she never saw one live after it got to the stage that that one did. After I quit treating the tur-ky it disappeared and we never saw it again.

About eighteen months later, one afternoon there was a large flock of turkeys came to Letta's. I sup-posed there were about one hundred; it seemed that all the neighbors turkeys had gathered together and among the flock there was a large gray turkey with

nine young turkeys. When Letta discovered the gray turkeys she claimed them. She said she did not believe her turkey hen had died, but had strayed off and set and raised nine young turkeys and had brought them home so she said she would drive them in the fowl house and keep them. She managed to get the old hen and five of the young turkeys in the fowl house but the balance of them got away with the flock. She said that she would sell the five young ones, for fear somebody would come and claim them. So the next day Rastus went to town so she caught the young turkeys and put them in the wagon. Rastus did not know they were not Letta's, in fact he knew nothing about how many or what kind of turkeys Letta had, and of course did not ask any questions about them. As she threatened me with violence if I ever told anyone about the turkeys so I said nothing about them. When she got them in the wagon, James Readen rode up, and when she saw him coming, she had some fears that he might recognize the turkeys, so to conceal them she ran and threw an old piece of rag carpet over them. I think the act of her throwing the carpet over them aroused James suspicion, though he said nothing about it to Letta. I believe he told his mother, for a few days later she came down to Letta's, and it was plain to be seen on her contenance that she suspected Letta of taking her turkeys. When Letta saw her coming she ran and turned the old turkey hen out of the coop. She said that she knew the old lady was coming to see about the turkeys but she would not find the old turkey hen in the coop. "Now," said Letta, "if the old lady does ask anything about the turkeys, I will tell her that one of these gray turkey hens is the one she gave me and the other is the one I bought of Miss Jackson. As I am satisfied James has told her, I sold some, I will admit it to her, and tell her they were mine that I raised, and as she knows nothing about them having the cholera, I can make her believe

I am telling the truth, unless you give me away about it, and if you do that I will kill you. You must tell the same story that I do. I warn you again, if you tell on me woe will betide you."

By this time the old lady was at the door. I met her and invited her in. The old lady could not conceal her suspicion on her contenance, but was too prudent to accuse Letta with such a charge without sufficient evidence. She asked Letta if any of her gray turkeys had been there. Letta replied that she had not seen any of them there. Mrs. Readen then asked her if she hadn't sold any turkeys lately. Letta told her that she had sold five gray ones. The lady asked her how many turkeys she had left. Letta answered that she had two. After the old lady had questioned her as thoroughly as a Philadelphia lawyer would his opponent, she rose up and walked out to the fowl house all alone and made a thorough search but found no turkeys there, so she decided to remain at Letta's the balance of the day. When the turkeys came home to roost, she went and made the second search. The gray hen that Letta had kidnapped from the flock was there and the one she had owned two years.

As Mrs. Readen did not find any gray turkeys except the two old hens that Letta claimed and having no proof she deemed it policy to keep quiet though she remarked that it did seem strange that Letta would sell the young turkeys before they were near grown, and just the number she had missed. But after taking in consideration that Letta was her daughter-in-law, and to make a charge against her meant disgrace to her family. She being a woman of high self respect thought she would rather lose the turkeys than expose any scandal in her family. So she went home and fearing she had suspicioned Letta wrongly she sent an apology to her asking her pardon for having made the search for the turkeys. Letta granted her pardon with tears in her eyes, saying it did hurt her feelings.

when she went there and inquired of her about the turkeys in the way she did, for she said, "I felt like she thought I'd stolen them, but in the name of the Meek and Lowly Jesus I forgive her."

This ended the turkey question and Mrs. Anna Readen is still in the dark as to what became of them. The only hint Rastus ever had of it was since he and Letta moved to Eureka Springs. Letta disputed with me about a debt she owed me, and I threw it up to her by sluring her, saying it was like the gray turkeys. She answered me by saying she did not want any insinuations, and ran off up stairs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

After Rastus and Letta had swindled everybody in the whole country that they ever had any dealings with, and they already had got to where nobody would trust them for one dollar, Letta suggested to Rastus that he aspire for the sheriff's office. And said candidates were then offering themselves. "There is \$4 000 a year in that office," said Letta, "and we had as well have the money as anybody." "Well, what must I do to get elected?" Rastus asked. "Why, just tell everybody you see that you want the office, and write to them you don't see, and tell them you are old John Readen's son, and your wife is a daughter of the late Rev. John Johnson, and when people hear that they will be sure to vote for you." So Rastus immediately got his pen and ink and some letter paper and sat down and wrote several cards and addressed them to different parties, he wrote the cards like this: "I am running for sheriff, I want you to vote for me; I am John Readen's son and

you know he is a very popular man and a member of the Methodist church, and I am a Methodist too, my wife is a daughter of the late Rev. John Johnson, and he was a man of great note in the Baptist church, my wife is a Baptist too, now if you will vote for me and get all of your friends to vote for me, I will be much obliged to you, and be elected." He then added that he was a democrat, and would submit himself to the democratic convention. After mailing those cards he and Letta talked the subject over and decided he would be more apt to obtain the greatest number of votes if he would aspire as a greenbacker, and run on the independent ticket. So he sat down and wrote more cards to the same parties, stating that he had changed his mind on politics, and turned to the greenbacker ticket. Rastus then decided to ride around over the country and lectioneer for himself. So the next day he saddled his best horse and started out. On leaving home Letta said to him: "Now, Rastus, you must not forget to tell everybody that you are a Methodist and a son of John Readen and your wife is a daughter of the late Rev. John Johnson, and when they learn that a man is running for sheriff that married one of preacher Johnson's girls, they will flock to you from all over the country and you will be elected by such a large majority that no man will think of running against you again, and after that you can get any office you want, not only in Pike County, but in the whole range of counties where father has been preaching for the last thirty or forty years, and after you serve one term as sheriff you can get to be senator of this congressional district, and go to congress in the place of that old Carroll, and leave that old rascal at home, and then we will get even with him for digging that spring on his land, and ruining ours, he knew the vein that supported our spring would be weakened by his digging a hole above ours, and we could not help ourselves nor dare to say a word as he dug on his own land, but

revenge is sweet and we will get it in the way of you being senator and leaving him out in the cold; and when you have been senator once you can get to be President of the World."

Rastus went according to Letta's bidding and whenever he came in contact with anybody he related to them his great desire to be sheriff of Pike County, Missouri, never forgetting to tell that he was a Methodist and a son of the prominent John Readen, and his wife a Baptist and daughter of the Rev. John Johnson.

Occasionally Rastus would meet parties who had enough respect for him to tell him he was fooling his time away as he stood no show to win in the race, but the bump for self conceit was too prominent to let any advice sway him, but on the other hand fell out with his friends. Whenever any of them attempted to advise him to withdraw, and on one occasion he got so angry that he threatened to kick one of his friends out of the county, his friend realizing that Rastus was only an insignificant piece of humanity, answered him in a gentlemanly way, that when he began the kicking he would be on hand, and that he would do better to go home and attend to his farm.

When he returned home he told Letta how some of them advised him to go home and attend to his farm, and how he threatened to kick them. Letta praised him for his bravery and said the only thing she blamed him for was for not kicking every one of them that gave him such advise, and advised him to let nothing daunt his courage, as he had nothing to fear, and was sure to win.

Rastus being a Methodist, had often heard the quaint old story, be sure and make your calling and election sure, notwithstanding Letta had answered him that his sheriff election would be sure, he had enough sense to know that if he was elected at all he would have to be elected by the votes of the people and not

by Letta's presentiments. And thought it best to make some efforts on his part, so he hired Joe Bradley under promise that he would pay him \$50 to go all over the county and lectioneer for him.

Joe Bradley canvassed the county as he hired to do and returned saying that every man in the county with the exceptions of a very few had promised to support him with their vote. The day before election Rastus and Joe Bradley went to Louisiana to do all they could for his election, which was as he thought to come up the next day.

I will here give the reader a symbol of Letta's intelligence. She ordered me to wash and iron a suit of clothes for Rastus to wear to Louisiana to lectioneer in. I washed it the evening before as she ordered. The suit being of very heavy goods did not dry sufficiently to iron, so she told me to heat the irons very hot and iron the suit till it was dry. I heat the irons and did the best I could toward ironing it, but could not dry it by ironing it.

When Letta saw the suit was not dry she blamed me for it, and stood nearby the table while I was trying to iron, and said "Iron faster, it is time for Rastus to start, he will have to be there early, so as to lectioneer for himself. I want you to hurry up or he will get beat, and if he does it will be your fault, and if you loaf around here and keep him waiting here for his suit instead of getting to town in time to lectioneer and cause him to get beat, it won't be safe for you, you wench you."

Finally Rastus called to know if his suit was ready. Letta answered him saying "No, it is not dry, you will have to go without it, for if you don't hurry and get there you will get beat. Get on your horse and ride fast, so when you get there you will have time to see and talk to everybody."

Rastus and Joe Bradley started on to town and never returned till late that night. When Rastus came

home Letta asked him what the prospects were for the next day, "Just the best in the world," said Rastus, "Everybody in town is going to vote for me." "I knew it, I knew it," said Letta. "The spirits told me so, and they never lie. Now you see how sure you are going to be elected, five thousand people are going to vote for you to-morrow, five thousand in one place." "No," said Rastus; "There will not be that many votes cast there, for more than half of the population of Louisiana are women and children, but all that do vote, will vote for me." "Oh, well," said Letta, "You will be elected any way."

Next morning Rastus got up early in order to get an early start, so as to get to the polls in time to get elected. Letta said to him: "Now Rastus you must wear your wedding suit to-day, and you will be the finest dressed man there, and that will cause lots of men to vote for you." She then said to me, "Hurry up now, and get breakfast ready, so Rastus can get to town in time to get elected; hurry up now, if you make breakfast late, and cause him to get beat, it won't be good for you." I got breakfast while she got out and brushed Rastus' wedding suit. Rastus had not worn his wedding suit since his marriage and it was entirely out of style, as his wedding suit was black cloth, made with very wide bloomer style legs, and the coat was made frock style, which almost touched his heels, his hat was a high stove pipe, but at the time of the election men were wearing their pants very tight fitting, with short coats and low rim hats. As Rastus left the house Letta entreated him to hurry-on fast and to say as he walked away from the house, about like a small boy would walk when his mother puts his first red striped knee pants on; and flapped his pants legs with his long narrow coat tail fluttering in the wind, with his stove pipe silk hat on, he seemed to be as proud as a dressed-up monkey. Rastus is a small man and to say that he looked funny, ridiculous and

comical when he got to town, that his neighbors were ashamed to be seen talking with him. In regard to what Letta said to him that he would be the finest dressed man at the election, I guess if the original cost of the goods counted for anything Rastus had on at least \$100 worth of goods and if fashion and cut of goods counted in tailoring, he had on a wider and longer cut than any man there. The man at the polls said he looked like a six or seven year old boy in the absence of his parents, dressed up in his father's clothes playing papa among his elder brothers and sisters as he pranced around in the broadcloth suit of the second greatest event of his life: his birth being his first and the second being when he stood up before a preacher by the side of Letta to marry the \$2,500 and few horses and cows that she owned.

There were five thousand votes cast that day and out of the five thousand Rastus got twenty votes which left his opponent, Swen Glan 4,980 votes. I have often wondered what those twenty votes thought of him when they saw him come marching up with his \$100 wedding suit on, of bloomer cut pants and sharp tail coat of fifteen or twenty years past, while they were dressed in tight pants and short coats of modern style. They may have wished they had been thoughtful enough to have saved their wedding suits to wear on election days. Well, in those days at election they were accustomed to counting the votes as they were cast and as Rastus so seldom heard his name being called as being voted for and his opponents name being called almost every time, he stood off and looked amazed and finally said to some of the men that had promised to vote for him, but on the sly had voted for his opponent, "There must be something wrong, for they call Mr. Glan's name nearly every time, why I thought everybody would vote for me." They answered him that they guessed the other man was generally supposed to be the most suitable. When the returns

were all in the Judges counted the votes and called out Rastus Readen, 20 votes; Swen Glan elected sheriff of Pike County, Missouri.

When Rastus heard that all his hopes vanished, he got on his horse and started home. When he reached home he got off his horse and ordered Joe to take it to the barn. Rastus walked slowly to the house and, on opening the door he said in a sad and low spirited tone, "Letta, I am beat!" Letta who had retired early, feeling perfectly confident that she was the wife of the sheriff of Pike County had fell into a deep slumber. On hearing Rastus speak in such piteous tones she roused up and said, "O, you'r joking ain't you?" "No, I am beat and beat bad," said he. "How in this world did it happen. I am surprised to hear that you are beat. I was so sure you was elected that I went to sleep with my mind perfectly at ease, but how many votes did you get?" "I only got twenty," said Rastus. "Only twenty, and nearly every body in the connty our relations. You surely didn't get to the poles early enough to electioneer for yourself," said Letta. "Yes I did but the men wouldn't hardly talk to me."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

After Letta had made every effort in her power to prevent me from marrying, she dicided that her efforts were in vain. She said to Adie Bradley, "I think Lou will marry before long, and you shall take her place when she is gone. I don't intend to allow you as much liberty as I have Lou. I shall tighten the reins on you a great deal closer than I have on her. Your

old drunken daddy will never be able to protect you, so I expect to make you toe the mark. You shall cook wash, iron, milk, churn and sweep the yard and do everything else that needs to be done. I have given Lou too much freedom, otherwise she would not have had a chance to get married." Adie listened to her several minutes and then said, "Now look here aunt Letta you have been threatening the vengeance of your tyrant iron will upon me, and have been telling me that it was mamma's request that you should have the care of me after her death. Now I will inform you that papa has told me a different story. He says that mamma did not want you to have the care of me or any of her children after her death, and she said before she died that you deserved to be put in the penitentiary for the way you have treated Lou. If papa is a drunkard he will never see me treated any worse than Lou has been. Everybody knows you have not treated her right. I don't intend to stay here any longer after papa gets a situation so he can help me." Letta stormed at her using all kinds of vile language to her and Adie said, "You claim to be a christian and claim to be guided by spirits, but you do not act much like one. Just look how you treat Lou and me calling us vile names without any cause. We do all we can to try to please you, and you never speak a civil word to us. How you talked about Mrs. Dollman about those old rotten beans you sold her. Just think of it! A christian calling her neighbor the filthy names you called her." Letta then said that she had a right to call Helen Dollman vile names for not paying her the fifty cents she owed for the beans and she said she told Lou to do the washing that evening but she didn't do it. At this Adie said that I was sick with a hot fever. "It doesn't make any difference if she is sick," said Letta, "if she was a good girl shd would go and do the washing anyway." "If you were a good woman you would not want her to wash when she is sick,"

said Adie. "Papa said you were a heartless fiend and a tyrant. I am glad that papa is near at hand and I know I am free from your clutches and I defie you to treat me any worse than you have Lou. You have abused her until she hasn't the courage to defend herself. She is grown and yet she takes all kinds of abuse from you and never gives you a saucy words. You told papa that you wanted to get me so you could educate me. He said you wanted to educate me like you did Lou and everybody knows how you educated her. You never sent her to school three months in all and when you did let her go, you made her go without books."

"Now you are angry," said Adie "because you think Lou is going to get married. Well it is the custom of this country for men and women to marry. Even women who have good and pleasant homes marry, and I don't think anybody will blame her for marrying, and getting away from you. She has worse than no home at all here. Letta stormed at her again saying, "I feel like killing you. Don't you let me hear another word from you. If Lou does marry I hope she may be cursed with fifteen chuckle-headed children and she and all her children to starve to death." "This is Christ-like," said Adie, "a christian lady wishing for her own flesh and blood to starve to death."

This occured about a week before I was married, and as I had made no purchases for the occassion, and knowing Letta and Rastus would not buy anything for me, I decided to collect some money on a note that one of my uncles owed me. The next Saturday evening I told Rartus I would like to go to my uncle's the next morning. I did not tell him my object in wanting to go, in fact I had not told anybody that I intended to marry. Rastus emphatically told me that I could not have any of his horses to ride to my uncle's and farther said that if I went I might walk, as far as he was concerned. I said nothing more to him, as I knew to

answer anything he said would cause more vituperation from him. But when Mr. Dickerson called that evening, I apprised him of the fact that Rastus had refused to let me have the use of a horse, but he consoled me by telling me that he would hire one for me. In this instance I felt that I had the protection of my intended husband.

The next morning Mr. Dickerson came on horseback and brought a horse for me to ride. This being Sunday morning Letta had gone to the Baptist church, and Rastus was getting ready to go to the Methodist church. And when Rastus saw the horse at the gate with the side-saddle on, he did not want his neighbors to know that after I had worked for him twelve years, under his, and Letta's most vile abuse until they had entirely destroyed my health, that he was too mean to me not to allow me to have a horse to ride to my uncles, he said, "Lou, I suppose that horse out there with the side saddle on is for you to ride." "Now Lou" he said, "don't you know that there is a horse here for you to drive whenever you want one." I answered him by saying that he had told me yesterday that I could not have one and that if I wanted to go anywhere I should walk. He then said, "what will Tom and Ann think? Since you have been here twelve years, and now can't get a horse from me to ride a few miles to your uncle's. I suppose they will say poor Lou, she has worked so long for Rastus and Letta and now can't get a horse to ride that short distance. What will your uncle James think when he sees you riding up there on a horse that he knows is not mine. Now you have done this to get me talked about." He continued to abuse me until I went with Mr. Dickerson out to mount our horses.

Heretofore the tyrants had made it a rule that on going to church on Sundays I had to remain behind them and lock the house. This was to keep me out of the way of the young people that would like to have been my associates. And on this occasion after Ras-

tus had vented his spleen of abuse upon me until he saw me mounting to leave, he was not done dressing, but stepped to the door and viciously stormed at me, to know why I was leaving without locking the house. As I knew I would soon be free from his and Letta's abuses, I ventured to ask him if he wanted me to lock him up in the house, upon which he again stormed at me saying that it was my business to wait and lock the house after he left. To this I made no reply.

I am sorry to have to give him and his (not better but) worse half credit for being unequaled in forethought in planning in low down unprincipaled meanness, but in this instance his forethought was so short that he could not think of the fact that I was going to my uncles to spend the day while they were going to church and would return for their dinner and if I had left last I should have lock the house and carried the keys, then they would be locked out after they returned after preaching

Mr. Dickerson and myself arrived back at Rastus, and Mr. Dickerson left while I went in the house. Letta and Rastus would have killed me if they had not been afraid of the law. And as the law stood in their way they tried with all the power they could muster of their own, and all they could borrow from their nearest relation, the chief of the lower regions, to abuse me to death with their tongues. I did not tell either of them of my intentions but they suspicioned from my movements that I would marry some time that week, so they wanted to get every turn of work from me that they possibly could while I was there, for they knew they would never get another slave as I had been.

They burdened me with an extra amount of work the last three days I remained with them and on Monday Letta gathered the largest washing for me to do that I ever did in my life. Letta was not accustomed to gathering up the washing on wash days, in fact she

was not accustomed to doing anything except quarrelling, but on this occasion as she thought I would not be with her another wash day, she searched all the bureau drawers and wardrobes, and got all such clothing as had not been worn since they had been washed before. To give me a hard farewell she gathered all the fabrics of every kind such as fancy pillow slips and shams, bed spreads and quilts and all linen and many other articles of the kind. These were added to the ordinary weekly washing. The next day being Tuesday, besides imposing all the ironing on me after doing all the domestic work she ordered me to peal and can two dozen quart cans and preserve one and a half bushels of peaches. I worked from four o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock that Tuesday night while they were sleeping.

The next day was set for my wedding. Mr. Dickerson called at the house late Tuesday afternoon, and inquired of me what hour I wanted to leave the next morning. I told him I would be ready by eight or nine o'clock. Letta overheard us talking and as quick as he was gone she began to tongue-lash me again. Wednesday morning Rastus called me at four o'clock saying, "Get right up right now and get to work for you have to worm the cabbages today." When breakfast was ready and all of us seated at the table, he gave a long routine of work that I should do that, and saying that I had better have it done by evening or he would make me sorry. When breakfast was over I done up the mornings work as usual and dressed for my departure.

I did not ask them for the privilege to marry at their house for three reasons, first, I did not want to, second, I had too much contempt for them to let them see me marry, third, that I heard Letta tell Addie that I should not prepare a mouthful of anything to eat for the minister, Mr. Dickerson or myself and that she would see that we ate none of her grub, as she called

it. It was half past eight when Mr. Dickerson arrived. I had barely got through dressing when he arrived, and thus my agonizing, cruel slavery days were ended. When Mr. Dickerson arrived I did not wait for him to come to the house as I knew he would not be welcome and I felt that I was welcome only to work, so I walked out and down the path that led to the gate without a parting word to Letta or Rastus.

About a week after I was married I met Adie in the road as she was going on an errand for Letta, and she told me the day I left Letta said to her, "Now Adie if any body asks you how we get along without Lou, you must say "Oh, we don't miss her, for Aunt Letta done all the work any way." "Why that would be telling a lie and I don't tell lies, and every body around here knows that Lou did all the hard work while she was here." At this she said Letta became very angry with her and threatened to kick her for speaking in my favor. But she was not afraid of Letta's carrying out her threat as long as her papa lived near, for he would protect her if Letta resorted to violence. She said, "Lou I am glad for your sake that you are free from those fiends, and how I do regret that papa allowed Aunt Letta to have me, even for a short while and I do think that Letta is an old devil, but I guess I will have to do the best I can until papa gets in better circumstances." Several weeks later I went to Lettas to get my clothes and it being nearly night when I reached there, I was compelled to remain over night so as to get my clothes together. Adie was ironing when I got there and she told me she had been working hard all day and was very tired. It was after six o'clock when she finished the ironing, nevertheless she had to get supper without any assistance, and after supper wash the dishes and clean the kitchen and when she got through Letta ordered her to churn. It was then nine o'clock at night, Adie begged her, saying: "Oh! Aunt Letta, do please let me

postpone the churning until morning, I am so tired." Letta became raving mad and hollered at Adie "Go and church, and don't you never dare to offer to stop work any more as long as you can find something to do, you impudent little whelp you."

Adie never returned a word that time but went in the kitchen to church, I retired and left her churning. While I lived there I often had to do the same amount of churning, and know she must have churned till about twelve o'clock at night. She churned six gallons of cream, and the butter, to wash and put away the churn and crocks to clean and store away and at the same time she was yet but a child, and notwithstanding this child done so much work day after day, Letta was not satisfied. Said she intended to get Adie's sister, Maudie, who was younger than Adie. That she was more industrious than Adie, and said she could get five times as much work out of Maudie than she could get out of Adie. And said she thought that she could find work to keep them both busy, as she could then make rag carpets to sell and profit by their labor. But Rastus told her she should not keep either of them, but should do the work herself, and that he had endured her laziness as long as he intended to.

CHAPTER XXIX.

As stated, Letta offered Adie and Maudie's father free storage, and thereby got his household goods in her clutches, and then cut their clothes bedding, etc. into carpet rags, and had me put in the loom one hundred warps for weaving the carpet rags so ill gotten, and I had wove about fifty yards of it when I married, the other fifty yards still being in the loom. Adie was

too small to weave, but not too small for Letta to abuse for not being able to fill the place at work that two grown girls ought to fill and weave the carpet besides. And industry on her part at such a high premium, and laziness so predominant that several months later when I returned after some clothes I had left there, Letta tried to get me to stay and finish weaving the carpet, stating that Adie was no account and said if I would stay and weave it out for her she would board me free of charge during the time I was weaving. I answered her that I had not come to board, but to stay for only an hour or so until I could get my few clothes in shape so as to take them away. She said stay and rest while you weave it out, you will not have to do any of the cooking or milking, Adie can do that. I answered her that I would try to make my time more remunerative. I thought she ought to be satisfied with the twelve years hard work I had already done for her. She then said there were about twenty barrels of apples to be gathered for the market and said she wanted a barrel of cider made, and if my husband and myself would come and gather the apples and sort them, and put them in barrels ready for market, and make a barrel of cider for her she would give us one bushel of apples. I answered her that I did not want the apples as they were worth only ten cents per bushel and my husband was making three dollars per day working at his trade in the shoe shop, and it would take us two or three days to do the work she wanted us to do; and moreover the neighbors had already offered to give me all the apples I could make use of. She then apprised me of the fact that James Readen had deceived her by placing a mortgage on her farm before he deeded it back to her. She then wanted me to agree to swear in court that James had got the deed to the farm under false pretenses. She said Rastus had told her that James had put the mortgage on the farm for the money Rastus and her owed him, so

Rastus is against me, and said as they owed James they had to let the mortgage stand for the debt they owed him, but she said if I would swear like she wanted me to, she would throw the mortgage off the farm, and let James pay the mortgage, and that she had found out that Rastus has been selling wheat without her knowledge and bought and drank whiskey, and if he didn't quit it she would get a divorce from him and let him go his whiskey route and she would go her way.

I listened to her speech in silence and then answered her that I could only testify to what I really knew; I knew that she was no friend of mine, and only wanted to use me as a cats paw in order to accomplish her own purpose, and as I knew James was justified in placing the mortgage on the farm I thought it right that the farm stand good for the debt, and as she had so shamefully abused me for wanting the fifty dollars Rastus had borrowed from me, I was only glad to know they would have to pay the mortgage on the farm, or let it be sold. I got my clothes and went home. Inasmuch as she had told me that Rastus should never pay me the fifty dollars they borrowed of me, and after she had determined to make false proof if she could to prevent paying money they borrowed of James, I decided to sue Rastus on the note I held against him.

Letta had often told me that if I ever tried to make them pay the money they borrowed of me she would make me pay three dollars a week for all the time I was with them, and when she learned that I had entered suit, she went to a lawyer and proposed to deny paying me by putting in a rebuttal of three dollars per week for twelve years that they held me under their tyranny and made me work at least sixteen hours and often eighteen hours per day. Now as there are fifty-two weeks in the year and \$3 per week would have been \$156 per year and as I was their slave twelve years, her bill would have been \$1,872 that she would have

taken out of me had it been in her power, for making a slave of me in the place of educating me as her and Rastus had promised to do in order to deceive my father to get me away from him.

But the lawyer told her that she could not deny payment in that way, and if that was her defense she had better pay it without cost. Soon thereafter Adie and Maudie's father went to Trinidad, Colorado, and left Maudie with one of Letta's sisters who had a large family of her own and Letta saw her sister, Mrs. Prichet and got Maudie. As Rastus had forbidden her taking Maudie, Letta had Maudie in the house before he knew it. Rastus then told her that she should not keep either, and both of the girls, Adie and Maudie, told me that Rastus and Letta quarreled all the time, except while they were asleep, each threatening to kick the other off the premises; Rastus threatening to kick Letta for not sending them away and Letta threatening to kick Rastus for wanting them sent away. Oh! think how melancholy those poor little motherless orphans' hearts must have been when they reached the crisis where they were forced to realize their precarious condition, they knew their only welcome was on the part of Letta, and that was only for the sake of their service, for which they never received even a kind word from her, but on the other hand, she heaped all manner of abuse upon them by burdening them with hard and heavy labor, and when they had done all they could do, the only reward they received was to be called vile names for not having done more.

It was they so keenly felt that their father was a drunkard and their mother was dead. How sad their little hearts must have been on retiring at night. I think I hear their little piteous moans as they wept, till their pillows were saturated with tears. As Letta then had two niece slaves, she indulged herself in laziness so much that she required them to dress her on arising in the morning and help her wash

and comb her hair. Language fails to express how disgusting Letta really made herself, but finally Rastus told her he had endured her as long as he intended to, unless she would send the girls away and do the work herself, which she refused to do. Rastus then told her he intended to have them placed in the county poor house, unless some of their relation give them a home, as he was determined to get rid of them, and make her do the work. She demurred, and told him that the girls should not be sent away.

While Rastus and Letta were quarreling about the children, James Johnson happened to be passing their house and heard the turmoil, and stopped to see what the trouble was about.

Rastus looked out and saw James Johnson had stopped and went out and met him at the gate. On meeting each other, Mr. Johnson said to Rastus "What on earth is the caase of this trouble between you and Letta? I am perfectly astounded at both of you, I heard the wrangling when I was a half mile up the road, why it is an ignominy to our family." "Well, I know it is," said Rastus, "but I can't help it, I have endured Letta's laziness and meanness as long as I feel able to, and I don't intend that she shall keep Adie and Maudie here to serve her, I will petition to the county court to have them put in the pauper's home if some of their relatives don't take them off my hands, and if Letta don't conduct herself better you will have have to take her and take care of her, as you are the only brother she has that is able to support her." "No," said Mr. Johnson, "You married her for her money and you must maintain her or she will have to support herself. But, I will take Adie and Maudie to my house till I can get a home for them; I will never allow them to be sent to the poor house if I have to support them myself; but I can't come for them this week, I wish you would let them remain at your house a few days longer, and I will either come or send and get them."

"No," said Rastus, "They shall not shelter here another day, I will send them to you in the morning." "Very well," said Mr. Johnson, "Send them any time it suits you. Good-day."

Rastus then turned to the children and said, "Now you heard what your Uncle James said, and you must get your clothes together and be ready to leave early in the morning." Letta forbid them gathering their clothes, saying that she was boss and they must obey her order and pay no attention to anything Rastus said. Rastus again ordered them to get their clothes packed and told Letta he would split a board over her head if she interfered with them. The poor little orphans soon got their little faded ragged clothes together, and Letta beckoned to them to go with her and they followed her out in the back yard and when she got far enough away that she thought Rastus could not hear she said. "Now Addie and Maudie, listen to my warning for your lives depend on it. Your mothers spirit appeared to me and told me that she did not want either of you to leave here, and told me to take a sharp knife and cut both of your throats from one ear to the other, and if you attempt to leave, I'll do it no matter what Rastus says you must not go."

The poor little orphan girls told me that they were so frightened that they didn't go to bed that night and kept their lamp burning. No human tongue could express the feelings of those little orphan girls as they whispered to each other saying, "I wonder which one of us she will kill first. It is such a terrible death to have your throat cut from ear to ear." They told me that every little noise they heard they thought it was Letta coming to cut their throats. But after they had watched for her till past the middle of the night and she had not come yet, they made up their minds that she had gone to sleep and forgot to cut their throats. Thus they talked all night until dawn of day and then their hopes for escaping alive cherish-

ed them. When it was daylight they decided they had better come out of the bed room, as Letta would have a better chance at them while they were in a small bed room, so they first very quietly opened the door and peeked out to see if Letta was near and as they did not see her they came out and waited in the yard until the balance of the family were up.

It being Sunday morning Letta called on Rastus to hold family prayers. He refused and told her that she was the most infernal hypocrite the devil had ever placed on earth and that he would not pray to please her. When she saw that Rastus would not lead in prayer she said to him, "Well if you wont pray, I will." She went through with a farce of a prayer herself and when at breakfast she went through a form of returning thanks for the rich blessings the Lord had daily bestowed upon her. She never said one word to the Lord about trying to atone for the wrong she had perpetrated upon her dead sisters orphan children by trying to force them to succumb to her wishes by scaring them nearly to death, by threatening to cut their throats. When breakfast was over Rastus asked Adie and Maudie if they had their clothes packed ready to go. They said that they had. He then told his John to hitch up and take these little niece slaves up to your Uncle James. Letta said, "John I forbid you obeying your father's orders." "John did you hear me, go this moment and obey my orders, said Rastus. John went to get the rig ready and Letta told Maudie to come to the kitchen. Letta then said to her, "Maudie you are my favorite girl and I want you to stay and I want you to go and beg Uncle Rastus to let you stay, and if you will I will buy you five cents worth of candy the next time I go to town." Maudie told me she did not want Rastus to let her stay, but as she was in the kitchen and there were so many bright knives lying around and she was afraid to refuse for fear Letta might cut her throat before she would be

able to call for help, so she went and asked him if she might stay, upon which he yelled out N-o-o so loud that it almost stunned her, and he again called to John to hurry up and take these little servants up to your Uncle James. Rastus then said to Letta, "In the future I want you to remember that I am wearing the breeches, and my orders must be obeyed." Letta then said to him, "You had better let Maudie stay to do the cooking and washing." "No, you shall do the work yourself and I intend that you shall sweat some of the devil out of you." John drove up to the gate with the buggy and the two little girls got in and drove away.

A few days later Mr. Johnson was passing Letta's house and decided to stop and see if peace had been restored. He found Letta at the wash tub crying. Walking up to her he asked her what she was crying about. "Why I ha-have to cook, boo hoo, and w-wash, boo-hoo-hoo." "Oh, that's nothing, all the farmers wives wash and cook and my wife is proud that she can do it and I think she loves to put a lot of nice clean clothes out to dry that she washed herself and as for cooking, I know she is proud of being able to cook such nice meals. So if that is all you are grieving about, something that you ought to be proud of. Rastus is a poor man and will get poorer, instead of richer, if you don't take hold with a will and help him.

CHAPTER XXX.

Some two or three months after I married my husband and myself moved to Frankford, Missouri. While there one evening I was reading the Louisiana Journal and in looking over the advertisements, I saw Letta's farm was to be sold under sheriffs sale to satisfy the

mortgage. A few days later Letta called at my house and my husband and myself were there, but she remained but a few minutes and never made any kind of business known. I suppose she came hoping to see us on the point of starvation as she wished us all kinds of evil. She had not been gone more than half an hour when Mrs. Draper came in and asked me what it was that Letta and I knew concerning James Readen that our sworn testimony would be sufficient to send him to the penitentiary. I replied that I knew nothing at all. "I am sure Letta told me that you knew something of him that would send him to the penitentiary and that her object in coming to see you was to talk it over with you." I assured her that Letta said nothing to me in reference to James and again assured her I knew nothing against James that would send him to prison.

I will relate one instance that will demonstrate Letta's popularity during the time she was working with might and brains to end her single bliss, and up to the time she was eventually lucky enough to capture (in her estimation) the illustrious Rastus. During the time we lived in Frankford there was a party of young people, who lived in Frankford, took a little pleasure trip to Louisiana and in the crowd was a young lady that was curious to know who lived at each and every farm house. Mr. Jones seemed to know who lived along in the different houses answerd her questions. Finally while passing Letta's house she asked him who lived there. "Why old hell scratch." "Old hell scratch!" exclaimed the young lady, "Who is that?" Why, before she married Rastus Readen she was old Letta Johnson and considered one of the meanest women in the whole country, and was (as the boy expressed, when a gentleman asked him of his pigs, he said, "The cholera had killed three thirds of them and only left him two.") So she was three thirds crazy to marry and had only two senses left and she concentrated those two on marrying. So she run after every

young man in the whole country trying to get married and by telling every one that would notice her that she was heir to \$2,500.00, and three head of horses, two cows, four sheep and three hogs. She kept up these proceedings until she saw twenty-five summers roll by. But none of the young men seemed to care for her matrimony desires until she met Rastus, who was in his twentys and seemed to be in need of the \$2,500.00 in cash that she had on hand.

Some time later we moved from Frankford to Hanibal where Mr. Dickerson had procured a position in a shoe store and soon after James Readen called to see us and told us that Rastus would not come to see us because he was angry at me because I sued him for \$50 he had years before borrowed of me. Mr. Dicker- said he saw Rastus up town in a saloon taking a drink of whiskey and he didn't come in at the back door like he does at home, but as he was where he thought no body knew of his religious devotions like they do about Frankford, he walked boldly in at the front door and called for a drink of seven year old Kentucky Rye.

My health was so injured by the cruelties that were imposed upon me by Letta and Rastus, that Dr. Allen advised Mr. Dickerson to take me to some health resort as a change of climate would be more beneficial to me than medical aid. We decided to go to Vichie Springs, Missouri, as he thought there was a good opening for a boot and shoe store and so we went to the famous Vichie Springs. I did not hear from Letta and Rastus for several years during which time we moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas. I was taking dinner at the Star Restaurant, and there was a very nice looking gentleman sitting opposite to me at the table, and another gentleman asked him if he lived at Eureka Springs, and he said that he did, and then he asked him if there was a good opening for a hotel, and he said that he thought there was and farther stated that if a man with a little capital would open a first class

boarding house he would do well especially if he would manage it like a man there by the name of Readen who runs a hotel by the name of Pede Mount, who never pays his bills except when he is sued. I listened to him and wondered if it was Rastus and when he got through speaking to the other party I asked him if he knew where Mr. Readen was formerly from. He said that he did not. I said to him, "Pardon me for being so inquisitive, but I once knew a man by that name in Missouri, and I thought he might be the same man." "It may be the same man but this man has but one ear and has a wife by the name of Letta or Setta or some thing like that and a boy by the name of John. His wife is a rogue of a woman and don't allow him to pay his debts if she can help it and he beat a butcher out of one hundred and thirteen dollars.

CHAPTER XXXI.

After Letta and Rastus through dishonesty lost their property and moved to Eureka Springs, Ark., and through the assistance of his father opened a boarding house on Spring street called the Pedemont, where the people knew nothing of their past schemes of beating their creditors. It was to be hoped that they would grind arms of their Missouri proceedings, and about face and forward march in the straight and narrow path of justice and honesty.

But not so, for they planned between themselves to put their house in Letta's name and Rastus buy all he could on credit from furniture dealers, merchants, meat markets and even of wood dealers and hired help down to the wash woman and run as long as they could

without paying for anything, and when called on for the money Rastus would say, "I have no money today," and continue their nefarious schemes in that way until Sued on the claims and then plead that Rastus contracted the debts and had nothing to pay with, Letta claiming the property under deed to her and many of their creditors not knowing anything about law rather lost their money than to go to court.

I will here give the reader a few instances wherein he tried to bluff some parties out of money he owed them for labor done at their boarding house. There was a Mrs. Young who did their washing and also did some washing for one of their gentlemen boarders, and when she delivered the man's washing Rastus informed her that the gentleman was not in, so she left his clothes thinking to call again for her pay which she did the next morning. Rastus again met her and told her the man was not in, the lady went home and returned in the afternoon, she found the gentleman in his room packing his trunk. When she entered the room he said to her "I will not have any more washing for you this week, I will leave on the first train, but I think I will return some time next year, and if you are here when I return I shall be pleased to have you do my washing again." Mrs. Young was a little embarrassed at his not tendering her the money he owed her, and finally said to him "I would be pleased to have the amount you owe me for the washing I did for you this week." "Why," said he "I gave it to Mr. Readen before you delivered my clothes. I told him I might be out when you came, and told him to pay you to save you another trip." "Why," said the lady, "This is the third time I have been here for the money and Mr. Readen met me each time and referred me to you." "Well," said he "Walk down to the office with me, we will see Mr. Readen about it." She went with him to the office and as they stepped inside the door they met Rastus coming out;

Mrs. Young approached him saying "Mr. Readen this gentleman tells me he left my money with you before I delivered his washing." Rastus appeared dumbfounded, and without saying a word he put his hand in his pocket and got the money and handed it to her. She was then convinced that Rastus was dishonest and almost decided not to do any more washing for his house, but as she was a widow with two little children depending upon her for support, she concluded to take her chance of getting her pay, and try to do the washing again, so the next week she came to do the washing.

Rastus was already in debt to her \$1.40 and to bluff her he went out to the wash room and said to her, "What has become of the soap I bought last week to wash with?" "Why, I don't know," she replied, "I have not had any soap except the one bar Mrs. Readen gave me last week to do last week's washing." "Now," said he, "I bought twenty-five cents worth of soap last week, and it is all gone, now," said he "You are responsible for the soap, and I shall not pay you until you find it." "Well," said Mrs. Young, "If that is your game, I will not wash for you, and you must pay me the money you owe me, or I shall put it in the hands of an officer." Rastus refused to pay her, and she stopped washing and went home. Next morning she decided to give him another chance to pay her without cost and sent him a note stating that she would enforce the law if he did not send the money to her by the bearer of the note. Rastus treated her notice with silent contempt, and Mrs. Young gave the account to an officer to collect, and he advised him to pay her as it was such a small amount, the cost of a suit would amount to more than the account, so he paid her without further cost.

In another instance Rastus hired a Miss Russel to cook for their boarding house and when she would call on him for money, he would put her off with the

promise of having the money for her in a week or so till she worked for him to the amount of \$25 at which time she told him she was obliged to have some money. He again said he had no money. She told him she must have her money. He then flew in a passion and told her his wife owned everything and he would not pay her and threatened to beat her and started at her, upon which she had run down stairs to escape punishment in place of her money. Rastus had made it a habit of threatening weak women and people of small means to scare them from suing him. But Miss Russell was not to be bluffed out of her money so easily, and sued him and Letta and got her money. The Justice before whom she put the case called a jury and one of the jurymen told me he never heard anybody contradict themselves in so many lies as Rastus and Letta did in trying to beat that girl out of her wages.

In another instance a Mrs. Watkins sent her small son to Rastus with an account of \$2.50. When the boy presented the bill he said his mother was without anything to eat. Rastus said to the boy "I haven't got the money," and the boy said "we haven't got anything to eat." Rastus said "Now boy, keep your shirt on, and go out of my house." On another occasion there was a Mrs. Wilkerson who did the washing for the house, and Rastus kept putting her off for her pay till there were \$4 due her, and one evening she went to Letta and asked her for her money. Letta told her there was not one cent of money on the place and therefore she could not pay her. "Well," said Mrs. Wilkerson, "if you have no money here in the house you must go out of the house and get some for I must have my money. I have a mother and baby at home with nothing to eat." "Well," said Letta, "I can't help that nor I can't pay you for I have nothing to pay you with." Mrs. Wilkerson then sat down and said, "Well, I intend to stay right here till you pay me." "No," said Letta, "You need not sit here for it will do

you no good, besides we can't have you here in our way." Mrs. Wilkerson said "the sooner you pay me the sooner I will get out of your way." When Letta saw that Mrs. Wilkerson was determined to stay, she went to her room and locked the door, and one of the boarders walked quietly to the door and watched her through the keyhole and saw her unlock a bureau drawer and took from it a large roll of money from which she took a five dollar bill and after carefully placing the balance back, she locked the drawer, came out of her room and asked some of the boarders to give her change for the five dollar bill. She finally succeeded in getting the change and paid Mrs. Wilkerson her wash bill. After Mrs. Wilkerson left, Johny said to Letta, "Now, mama, you have made a big fool of yourself by paying her after telling her you had no money, now that shows how silly you are, why did you pay her after telling her there was not one cent of money here, and just to think all the boarders in the office heard you tell her you had no money, now they all know you lied." "Well" said Letta "I had to pay her for she sat down here and would not leave till she got her money, and Rastus was not here to scare her away."

In another instance Letta hired little Henry Fairfield to work her garden and flowers. The boy, eleven years old, was very anxious to make money for himself, so he worked five days in the garden and in the flower yard hoeing and pulling weeds, besides carrying a large amount of fertilized soil from a long distance, bringing a water bucket full at a time, till he made several large flower beds, and in order to hasten through with the job he hired another boy to help him and promised to pay him when Letta paid. When the job was done Henry said to Letta, "Well, Mrs. Readen, I have finished the work, now I want you to come and look at it and see how you like it." Letta went and looked at the garden and flower beds and pronounced it a good job and expressed herself as being well

pleased. Little Henry then said "Well, I would like to have my wages," and Letta handed a nickel to him. He refused to take it, saying "Why Mrs. Readen, do you expect to pay me for five days hard work with five cents? and I board myself." "Well" said Letta, "You may take that or nothing for I will not pay you any more." He then asked Rastus for his wages, and Rastus stormed at him saying "I don't owe you anything, you leave here before I kick you off the place."

I will now give my reader an idea how Letta treated her boarders; there was some people boarding with her at one time that were sick, and could not eat but very little of anything, and there was a boy came in her boarding house one day with some squirrels. the sick parties asked her to buy them and have them cooked for their supper, as they had no appetite for such diet as was commonly furnished; no, said Letta, I shall not buy any squirrels for boarders to eat, I expect my boarders to eat such as is set before them, and if any one of them want squirrel, they may pay for them themselves. Notwithstanding those people were insulted at her reply, they bought the squirrels and to test Letta's principle they made an agreement among themselves to have the squirrels cooked and when they came to the table offer the squirrels to her, and see if she was little enough in principle to partake and eat after refusing to buy; sure enough, when they came to the table some of them passed the dish of squirrels to Letta and as they expected she partook freely, and when she had eaten the first supply she called for the squirrels to be passed to her again, the boarders then left her and went to another boarding house. After Letta and Rastus had been in Eureka Springs several years they hired a good woman to cook for their boarding house, that they already owed \$10 borrowed money, and when she worked for them to the amount of \$35, she called on Letta for the money, (as Letta was the one that hired her) Letta told her to call

Rastus. She called on him; he took a piece of paper and sat down and asked the woman a long routine of questions as to who owned that property and if she did not know that Letta owned that house, etc. She said "Yes." Well then, said he, "You know I hired you," he wrote down that. She said, "He hired her, she said Letta hired me." He said to her "Sign this paper." She refused, and Letta rushed out of the next room and said "You are a base liar, I never hired you." The woman told Rastus she knew him to be a thief, but she would sue her money out of him and Letta, and when Rastus saw he could not bluff the woman out of her wages, he told her if she would knock off nine dollars from the thirty-five he would pay her the balance, \$26, and pay her the \$10 that he had owed her so long that it was out of date. So the woman agreed to knock off nine dollars. Then Rastus said he did not have the money but would give her his note, and it in a few days. The woman thought she could do better with note. He gave his note for only \$26 and he would not pay it, and the woman sued on the note and added the claim of \$10, and Letta and Rastus both swore all kinds of lies to beat the woman, out of paying the note and did swear her out of the \$10 by it being barred by the statute, and both swore that the the original recent debt was only \$26 and that the \$10 account was not mentioned when the note was given.

The above is only a few instances of their rascality. I could name hundreds; I will name one more. One Miss Royce worked in their boarding house, and on calling for her money, and their refusing to pay, she went into the dining room and spread syrup over everything and left without pay.

Finally they could get no help and had to rent their dining room and kitchen to one Mrs. Blackferd. Rastus reserved the right to do the room renting, collect for board and all, reserve \$1 per week and pay the residue to Mrs. Blackferd. Letta stole Mr. Blackferd's

provision to feed her chickens, purposely swept dirty water down on Mrs. Blackferd's fresh washed table linens, when hung out to dry. Rastus kept all the money, and Mrs. Blackferd had to pay her provision bills out of her own pocket and quit. Rastus played the same game on several unsuspecting women until his trickery was thoroughly ventilated among his assistants. And when he was known to be dishonest by rich and poor throughout the town there was a change of presidents, and with the president from Republican to Democrat the post office in Eureka Springs, Ark., changes to Democrat. So Letta said to Rastus now, as the people of this city have agreed between the Democrats to hold a kind of independent Democratic election and the one that gets the largest vote apply and be postmaster for four years. And said Letta, now Rastus you are as good a Democrat as anybody in Arkansas, and there is two or three thousand dollars a year in the post office, and as we have been here so long and known by everybody; and as you are a Methodist and I am a Baptist, and nearly all the people here are either Methodists or Baptists in Eureka, you will surely be elected, and with two or three thousand dollars a year we will show these people that we are no sardines. Well, said Rastus, Letta, it is a bright idea you have sprung. Yes, said Letta, it is a sure thing, but to be doubly sure you write to Grover Cleveland, as he has just got to be president, and ask him to give you his schemes to get elected and you will doubly sure of being elected. So Rastus wrote to Mr. Cleveland that he was aspiring for the post office in Eureka Springs, and that the Democrats agreed amongst themselves to allow the man receiving the majority of votes to apply for the office. He wrote Mr. Grover that events here made his election sure, but to make him doubly sure, he would thank him (Mr. Cleveland) if he would send him his best electioneering schemes. And he told Mr. Cleveland that he knew he was a good schemer,

that was why he wrote to him for instructions; he told Mr. Cleveland that he need not be afraid to let his electioneering schemes be known to him, that he was born a black democrat and dyed in the wool and entreated Mr. Cleveland not to fear, but to forward his sure cuts immediately; and said Rastus, "on your next aspiration, I will plant my best foot forward and shove you into any office you want, just as I have done before, and by your helping me now into the postmastership, in the future we will be jolly good friends and after I get to be a postmaster one term I can be elected to any office I want, and my next move will be to aspire to H. A. Censmore's place in congress, and will serve you faithfully in your cabinet." After waiting several days and not hearing from Mr. Cleveland, he again wrote to him saying that he had written to him for his best quirks and turns for working himself into office, and as the day of election was drawing near to please answer without delay. Your delay has already began to sour on my stomach, therefore forward it quick and don't let it enter your head that because you are in the president's chair you can stay there always without help from your friends, and remember that while you want to stay in the president's chair, I want to get into the post office at Eureka Springs, so take warning and be a little accomodating.

The election finally came off, and there were three candidates, Rastus, another man and a lady. Rastus ran all over the city and electioneered every voter to vote for him, while the other aspirants simply announced themselves as prefering the office if the good people of Eureka Springs prefered them. When the votes were being counted out the gentleman and lady aspirants attended to their business, while Rastus was on hand eagerly listening with his one ear as the votes were counted. Finally the judges called out, Rastus

Readen 2 votes; Mr. S — 150 votes; Mrs. W — 200 votes, and we announce Mrs. W — the choice of the people of Eureka Springs for post mistress.

Rastus went back to his Pedemount boarding house and said to Letta, "The people in Eureka Springs are just as big liars as they are in Pike Co., for you heard half the people promise me right here in your hearing that they would vote for me and you know many of them were Bastists and Methodists, and now you can see what kind of religion they have got. I only got two votes and one of them was my own and tne other was Johnies.

Time rolled swiftly on and Letta and Rastus were lucky to get some help and again started to keep boarders. One old gentleman, Mr. York, came to Eureka Springs to open a boot and shoe store and stoped at the Pedemount. Mr. York had never seen Letta until one day she happened to pass where he saw her from the office upon which he inquired of some of the boarders who that woman was. "Why that is our landlady," responded one of the boarders. "Our landlady," exclaimed Mr. York, "why she has the meanest face I ever saw and any body that has a mean a face as she has is bound to be mean, and I am going to board some where else." "O don't leave us," said the board-eas. "Yes I will, you need not entreat me to stay for I shall leave, for I know that under as mean a face as that, the old squab is chuck full of meanness. Why, I'll dream about that face and figure for a month. I wish I had never seen her. She cant possibly be a full blood human being. I'll bet she is half baboon, and I had fully as soon have a baboon fingering what I have to eat as to have her around it, so good day."

Soon after Mr. York had left she came in the office and got into an argument with her son John and one of the boarders about the fulfillment of the scripture. She said, "The floods and the grip were carrying the people away and it is a fulfilment of the scripture and

there are fewer people in the world now than years ago." John said, "Mother you are mistaken, there are more people in the U. S. than ever before. Just look at the people coming in the U. S. every day." "Oh well, they are foreigners, Dutch, French and Irish, they are not the people the bible means," said Letta.

Letta and Rastus continued to beat every body they had any dealings with until they got so low down that they could not get anybody to rent their kitchen and dining room and they could not run the boarding house themselves as nobody would trust them for so much as a dozen eggs, so they decided to let the whole house to some one, so they advertised the house as being for rent upon which they had several applicants, but when they saw Letta's face they said they did not want to try to run a house with such a face as that in it. But eventually one Mr. Eliat came and he like others did not want a house with such a face peeping around the corners. He said to Rastus, "If you will move that wife of yours entirely away from the house, I will give you \$500 per year, \$450 cash and \$50 before the end of the year." "Its a bargain," said Rastus.

Rastus emigrated with his beloved schemer to another part of the city and lived in rented rooms. During that time Rastus mother came and visited with them and staid two weeks. Letta complained of her eating their provisions and said that was the cause of their being scarce of eatables the balance of the year. Letta was not willing to balance accounts with her mother-in-law and consider the cost of her board while she visited three months with her mother-in-law. Letta even begged Mr. Eliat to let her and Rastus have one room in the boarding house to live in telling him that they were in such circumstances that they could not afford to pay the rent on the rooms they had rented and if her mother-in-law had not ate so much while she was with them they would not have been so

hard up. Mr. Eliat told her he was sorry to hear of them being in such circumstances, but he could not let her have a room and he told her he had heard that they quarreled every night, because she put her feet on Rastu's back and he would not let them have a room. "Well I will not put my cold feet on Rastu's back if you will let us only have just one room to live in till your time is up. No, said Mr. Eliat, I can't let you come in here while I have possession. for you have the name of slipping around and eavesdropping at the keyholes and windows; therefore I shall not let you have a room here. Now ain't it come to a pretty pass, said Letta, that I can't live in my own house. This is not yours right at the present time said Mr. Eliat, it is my home so long as I pay the rent on it, and you must remain away till I give possession. Mr. Eliat was at that time a widower, and as he found it a difficult task to manage a boarding house without a wife so he chose among the fair sex and took to himself Mrs. Seashid to be his bride, and as he wished to go to Nebraska on his bridal tour and spend a few days of their honeymoon at the exhibition he sub-rented the Pedemount house to Mrs. Jentry and got married and took the trip, and when they returned Mrs. Eliate sold Mrs. Jentry a sideboard for which Mrs. Jentry paid Mrs. Eliate cash, and Mr. Eliate had paid Rastus the balance of the \$500 for one year. Mr. Eliate moved to Joplin, Mo., while Mrs. Jentry continued until the expiration of the twelve months that Mr. Eliate had paid Rastus for. And when Mrs. Jentry got ready to move from the Pedemount she called a job wagon to move her belongings and Rastus told the driver he should not move the sideboard, upon which the job wagon driver left the sideboard. Well, said Mrs. Jentry, I have often heard that you was a thief, Cherie's bit one of your ears off for trying to steal his hogs, and now you think you will steal my sideboard, but you will lose the other ear before you get it. And

as Mrs. Jentry's brother was in from the country, with his wagon near-by, Mrs. Jentry called to him to bring his wagon there, which he did, and she told him that Rastus, who bore Cherie's mark of but one ear, for trying to steal Cherie's hogs, was trying to steal her side-board. She said, brother, here is a bill of sale showing that I bought it from Mrs. Elieta, I have shown it to Rastus. Well, said her brother, I'll put it in my wagon and carry it where you want it. Rastus played bluff, but her brother said to Rastus to stand out of the way while he had one ear. And when Rastus saw that bluff done no good he ran for an officer, but when he got back with the officer he was too late, and when the case went before the justice Rastus fell in the cost, and was wiser but no more improved in principle than in ears. Then Rastus rented the dining room and kitchen to the woman that was there cooking for Mrs. Jentry. Well, Rastus, as on previous occasions, collected from the boarders, agreeing to keep one dollar per week for room rent, and turn the balance over to the cook woman, and when he owed the woman thirty odd dollars she called on him for her money to pay her grocery bills, but as money was so adhesive to Rastus' fingers he could not let it go, and as it was in the dining room and the woman felt pretty strong (as she was) she decided to remind Cherie called him to account on the hog question, and she succeeded in giving him a sound thrashing, but when the woman was on the south side he invariably kept his one ear facing north. And when the woman put him on the floor Rastus turned that ear of his on the lower side, when she let Rastus up he said it would take a better man than that woman was to get a bite at his ear. After she got through whipping him she packed her trunk and left the house, and Letta and Rastus were forced to close the house, as a boarding house, from the fact that they could get no person to take charge of the kitchen and dining room. Letta then tried to run the house as a rooming

house. She got a sign painter to paint a sign for her, and she tacked it up on the front of the house near the front door: the sign read furnished rooms for rent, but this attempt proved to be futile, for she could not get enough roomers to make expenses as most of the people were made to feel daunted at the appearance of her face. I know several ladies who went to the Pedemont house for the purpose of renting rooms, but when they saw Letta's face they became so awed by the mean expression she wore on her face, that they would not room there, and several have told me that they went there to look at the rooms, and on telling Letta the rooms did not suit them, she said to them, "Now you had better take these rooms, for they are the best in town, and are good enough for you or any lady like you.

Letta continues to make her own clothes after her own ancient designs: she claims that Paris, France, has never attained to her graceful and artistic tastes; she never goes without hoop skirts, whether the ladies in Paris wear them or not, she has a wig which she made after her design. The wig is made of sheep skin and colored with aniline dyes and ammonie, which makes it coal black. When Letta wears the black wooly wig, she imagines she is looked upon as having a very beautiful suite of black hair; she has a cheap gold-plated watch, such as can be bought for two dollars and fifty cents, and when she goes on the streets she pins the watch on the outside of her dress low down below her belt on the most conspicuous part of her large stomach. She wears gilt stripes on her jacket sleeves and collar; she thinks she is quite attractive on the streets, and she is ridiculously so. You would think of her like the little boy answered the gentleman, when the gentlemen asked him what kind of a dog he had. "Why," said the boy, "he is three kinds of a dog mixed." "Well," said the gentleman, "what are they?" Said the boy, "one is pug." "Well," asked the gentleman, "what is the next?" "Hound," said the boy.

“Well, what next,” asked the gentleman. “Why, just dog,” said the boy. So if you would see her on the streets you woeld think she was three kinds mixed, Chinaman, Baboon and just Baboon.

Letta’s appearance on the street is in harmony with her opinion of the laboring people for she says the man or woman who labors for his or her living shouldn’t be allowed to receive anything for their work except what they eat, and but very little of that. I have heard her say that when she was a little girl she would not speak to anybody who labored for wages, except when she was compelled to speak to them concerning work, and said she thought any kind of treatment was good enough for the poor, but since she is tasting poverty so sensitived, she is forced to knit lace and then beg people to buy of her, and complains greatly if anybody buys a few yards on credit and fails to pay the bill when due. It is then she heard to say I think it is awful mean in any body to have me knit lace for them and then not pay me for it. Yes, she is always able to see the right side when there is a few cents due her, but never sees it when some one else is the proper benefactor. Letta professes to be a strong believer in the Scriptures but always ignored all passages such as where it says the ‘‘laborer is worthy his hire, and woe unto him that would have labor without wages, or let your light so shine that others seeing your good works may be constrained to follow after you.’’ There never was an anckhorism more true than the old axiom, ‘‘It is a long lane that has no turn,’’ and if there is such a thing as the Lord showing his wrath to people by sending curses on them for the wrong the commit toward their fellow man, he certainly will send some calamity on Letta and Rastus for the way they have treated widows and orphans in their afflictions, not only the widows and their orphans but everybody else they ever had any dealings with. I am sorry to say I have lately heard that Mrs. Anne Readen has recently died. While

I hope that her departure from this world is her eternal gain, I cannot help but wish she had lived to read the pages in this book that explains how Letta stole and sold her gray turkeys, and so sharply lied, and led her to believe she knew nothing about them. I have no doubt but Letta is glad the old lady has passed beyond the vale where she will not be able to read of the disposition she made of the six gray turkeys she (Letta) took from her flock.

Letta and Rastus are still living in the Pedemont house, in Eureka Springs, at the mercy of their creditors who holds a mortgage on the house. Their darkest deeds have not yet been told, and is too obscene to be printed.

[THE END.]

Synopsis of Chapters.

CHAPTER I.

My first experience at church. My mothers death.

CHAPTER II.

The visit to our mother's grave. Our career during the Spring and Summer. Our father's second marriage.

CHAPTER III.

Grandmother warns stepmother to treat us kindly. The token of grandmothers death. Stepmother fears grandmother's ghost might return.

CHAPTER IV.

Stepmother complains of too many children. Brother complains of Santa Claus bringing babies to our home.

CHAPTER V.

Grandfathers death and will. Stepmother desires to break the will.

CHAPTER VI.

My oldest brother gets his leg broken. Stepmother rejoices. Stepmother attempts to shoot my brother.

CHAPTER VII.

Stepmother takes our presents from us.

CHAPTER VIII.

Stepmother takes chances on meeting grandmothers ghost.

CHAPTER IX.

My first trip to Arkansas. Why my father sent me from home. My introduction to my Aunt Letta.

CHAPTER X.

The books Letta sent me to school with. Rastus hurries everybody off to the Methodist meeting.

CHAPTER XI.

The Methodist meeting attended. Mrs. Penicks converted to Baptist faith. How I was treated while sick. The puppy in prayer meeting. Rastus hides whiskey. Letta puts red pepper in whiskey.

CHAPTER XII.

Letta schemes to prevent me from getting an opportunity to marry.

CHAPTER XIII.

James Readen's courtship and breach of promise and marriage.

CHAPTER XIV.

Letta plays crazy. Cooking rotten meat.

CHAPTER XV.

The spirits prescribe a bill of fare.

CHAPTER XVI.

Letta trades safty pins with Mrs. Howehin. Why John got scalded.

CHAPTER XVII.

Letta denies that music written in round notes can be read.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Letta robs her dead sisters children of their clothing. Letta's will.

CHAPTER XIX.

Letta sold rotten beans to Mrs. Dollmon.

CHAPTER XX.

Rastus visits his relatives at Poplar Bluff.

CHAPTER XXI.

I was never allowed holidays. Letta claims there is no sense in grammar or geography. Letta learning to play the organ.

CHAPTER XXII.

Letta's dream. Letta refuses to let a sick child have a pint of milk.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I was abused because I could run faster than a three year old filly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Rastus robs the school treasury. How he lost his ear

CHAPTER XXV.

Letta catching gray turkeys.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Rastus runs for sheriff.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Letta threatens Adie Bradly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Letta threatens to cut Adie and Maudie Bradly's throat.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Letta's reputation before marriage.

CHAPTER XXX.

Letta and Rastus' mutual agreement in Eureka Springs.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Letta's style of dress in the year 1900.

RECEIPTS.

COMBINATION SALAD.—Slice six radishes as thin as a wafer, one small onion, a small stalk of celery, six cucumbers, one-half teacupful of vinegar, one teaspoonful of salt, a little pepper. Garnish small dishes with tender bits of lettuce, put a large spoonful of salad in the center of dish and serve.

CELERY SALAD.—One bunch of celery, equal amount of cabbage chopped very fine, one tablespoonful of vinegar, one tablespoonful of salad oil, one-fourth teaspoonful salt, the same of pepper. Mix all.

TOMATO SALAD.—Peel and slice four large tomatoes, chop one onion very fine, beat one egg very light, one teaspoonful vinegar, one teaspoonful sugar, juice of one lemon, one teaspoonful salt, a pinch of cayenne pepper. Mix thoroughly and pour over tomatoes.

BOSTON BROWN BREAD.—Steam one cupful sweet milk, one cupful of sour milk, one half cup molasses, one teaspoonful soda, one cup cornmeal, one cup white flour, one cup Graham flour. Pour in quart cans and place over hot water and steam until done, then place in oven and brown.

SALT RISING BREAD.—Take one pint fresh milk, let boil, while boiling stir in one-half pint cornmeal, keep warm over night, early in the morning beat thoroughly and add one quart luke warm water, tablespoonful salt, stir in all ingredients thoroughly and make a stiff batter, place in a kettle of warm water, keep warm, when the yeast becomes light warm enough flour to make a dough very stiff, knead well. Make out in small loaves and set to raise.

LIGHT ROLLS.—One quart warm milk, one-fourth teacup butter, two tablespoonfuls sugar, one teaspoonful sugar, one teaspoonful salt, one cake yeast, two quarts flour, scald the butter and milk together, let cool, make a thin sponge, set to rise, when ready knead well, let rise again, then knead again. Roll out and cut in small cakes, let rise and bake.

COCOANUT CAKE.—One and one-half cup sugar, three-fourths cup butter, three cups sifted flour, one and a-half teaspoonfuls baking powder, whites of five eggs, one cup sweet milk, bake in layers, frost each layer and sprinkle cocoanut between.

SILVER CAKE.—Three cups flour, one cup sweet milk, one and one-half cups sugar, two thirds cup butter, the whites of six eggs well beaten, two teaspoonfuls baking powder. Flavor to taste.

CRUPO AND SORE THROAT.—Coal oil $\frac{1}{2}$ pint, apple vinegar 1 quart, rosin 1 ounce, turpentine $\frac{1}{4}$ pint, sugar 8 ounces. Boil vinegar and sugar together, dissolve rosin and turpentine together, then mix all together and take a teaspoon full three times a day.

BRIGHTS DISEASE.—Boil navy beans in clean water. When done pour the water off and drink it.

SEA SICKNESS.—Take ten drops of cloroform.

LINIMENT FOR MAN OR BEAST.

Alcohol and sweet oil 2 ounce each, aque amonia spirits of turpentine, oil of origanum, spike and gum camphor 1 ounce each, oil of pepper 1 ounce. Apply and rub briskly.

LINIMENT FOR INFLAMATORY RHEUMATISM.

Pulverized salt peter $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, sweet oil $\frac{1}{2}$ pint. Apply externally to the part affected.

BEE OR WASP STING.

Scrape an onion and apply to the sting.

LOCK JAW.

Warm a little spirits of turpentine and pour into the mouth.

CHILAINS AND FROST BITES.

Take 2 ounces of hogs lard, heat it hot and pour on ice, when frozen remove from ice and apply to frost-bitten parts twice a day.



LETTA AND RASTUS DOWN IN ARKANSAS.



By Lucy M. Crozier.



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